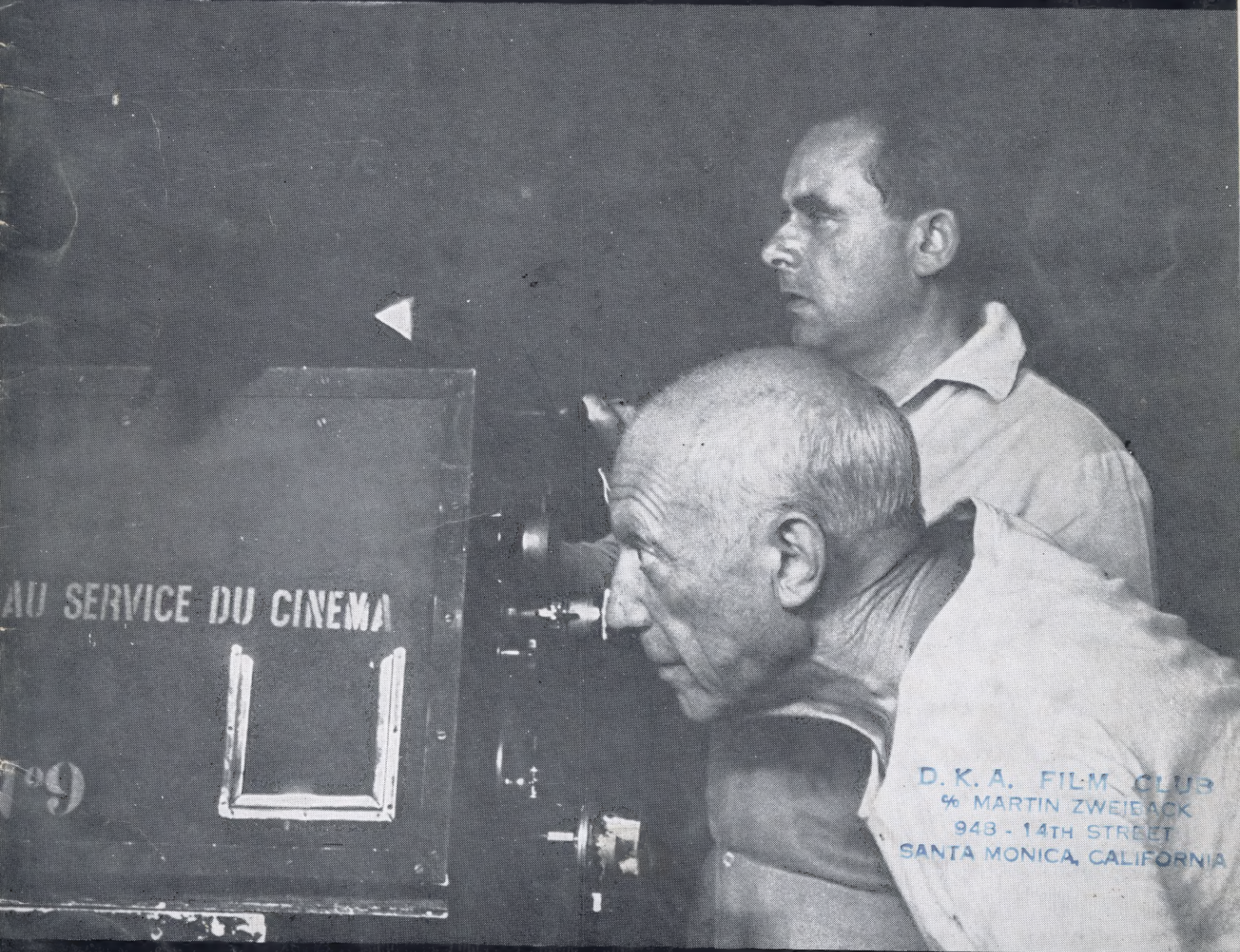


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# FILM CULTURE

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ON THE COVER: H. G. Clouzot and Pablo Picasso during the filming of *Le Mystère Picasso*, Special Jury Prize, Cannes, 1956.

(See page 11)

# AN ENCOUNTER WITH JOHN HUSTON

*Excerpts from a conversation between John Huston and Edouard Laurot*

HUSTON: Speaking about the philosophic content of *Moby Dick*—I am reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Devil and God Almighty*, which I read recently. He also deals in ultimates—that ultimate evil may in turn become ultimate good, for example. I feel that I'm saying what you are more familiar with, but it seems to me that one of the themes of the play is precisely the fact that there is an unpredictable interplay between Good and Evil and that therefore, no Manichaeian distinction between them can be made—though in this country there is a tendency to oversimplify moral and political issues.

LAUROT: There is no doubt about that. One of the main reasons for my having written the English version of *The Devil and God Almighty* was, precisely, my realization of how significant its ideas are for the modern world, and how important an American production of it would be. There haven't been any plays on Broadway in the past few years that could compare with the scope of its thought and the power of its dramatic impact.

HUSTON: I entirely agree with you. Aside from its purely theatrical qualities, it can be read as a sort of dramatic essay of ideas. I would risk saying that it's his best play. Don't you think so?

LAUROT: Yes, insofar as Sartre's expression through theatre goes, this play may be taken as his most advanced one. No other contemporary dramatist seems to have approached the dilemma of the modern intellectual with such boldness and perspicacity. *Waiting for Godot*, a play currently so popular with the Saturday Review type of intelligentsia, is at best a poetic prolegomenon to the problems affronted in *The Devil and God Almighty* by Goetz, the protagonist. For Goetz, of course, represents a type of the modern intellectual—at least the European intellectual—torn by an anguished conflict between his divided ethical, therefore political, allegiances. He describes a full circle of possibilities afforded by the modern world in his existential search for an ethic. But the play has a more universal meaning in that it

presents both man's craving for the Absolute and his rebellion against it.

HUSTON: This is what I really meant when I said that the ultimates are oversimplified here.

LAUROT: I'm very glad to hear this from you for, as you most certainly know, Existentialism, as a philosophy—as well as its personal and political implications—has been regrettably misinterpreted here—even in academic circles. And then—there are those popular conceptions that consider it either as an eccentric pose or as a gloomy philosophy of foredoom preaching moral anarchy and, therefore, an abstention from all responsibility. The whole of Sartre's creation and activity, as well as the fact that he has announced as his new project a work on ethics, should be known to at least the intelligentsia of this country. That's why at present I am making plans for a stage production of *The Devil and God Almighty*.

HUSTON: I'd very much like to see this play produced in New York. As a director, I'm also interested in it and have entertained thoughts of putting it on film. Sartre would be very strong medicine for Hollywood. They engage moral issues constantly, but on a superficial level. Here in New York, I believe he could meet with response; although when I staged *Huis Clos*, its depths escaped audiences and critics. Many thought it was a play about Lesbians. . .

LAUROT: I have a feeling that if *The Devil and God Almighty* were to be filmed under your direction, it might not suffer from a reduction in significance. You seem to be one of the very few directors who attempt to retain the substance of an original they adapt—insofar as this is possible.

HUSTON: You're very kind to think so. Sometimes, of course, one doesn't have to follow the original literally to remain faithful to the spirit. For instance—take *Moby Dick*. So far I've encountered only one person that did not approve of what I had done with it—he is a rabid reverer of every line in Melville's book—and, while I



respect his opinion very much, I do believe that my interpretation penetrates to the deepest parts of Melville. It emphasizes them and does not try to avoid any of them. What do you think about *Moby Dick's* message?

LAUROT: I think the book's content extends beyond the concept of message. In the first place, it is a book on the human condition, with all the complexities and contradictions that it implies; and it could not be reduced, as it has been by many, to the presentation of a struggle between "good" and "evil" forces. There is a poetic overtone in it, a song of man and the elements transcending the dramatically presented conflict. And, for the same reason, the book's power transcends the symbolism of images and situations. Even if we see Melville's world as a world humanized by an ethic, this ethic surpasses the Christian *Weltanschauung* . . . Remember Father Mapple's words? "Mortal or immortal, here I die . . . I have striven to be Thine, more than to be this world's, or mine own. Yet this is nothing; I leave eternity to Thee. . ." Ahab, on the other hand, is haunted by the Absolute, and that is why he, literally—hunts It. In this, he is comparable to Orestes in *The Flies*: they both want to liberate man from the Supreme Being. And beyond that . . . every work of art is a departure from the given world that is Nature, but it is an organized, explained world. The greatest works of art, however, go beyond the presentation of an intelligible world

and create one that is recognizable and yet as complex and subject to as many interpretations as the phenomenal world in which we live. . .

HUSTON: Yes, certainly. That is why I also think that Melville goes much further than just the presentation of opposing, warring concepts. He seems to have written the book with several parts of his nature. It isn't just one man and one point of view—it is a half a dozen men and different points of view. It is the writer, the moralist, the philosopher, the scientist, the cetologist, the dramatist. I don't attempt consciously to correlate all his facets in my film, but let them exist in their original richness and spontaneity. For example, I think that he wrote the Father Mapple speech in a completely different spirit from that in which he approached the philosophical vein that runs through the book and underlies the events. He wrote the sermon as a religious man, deeply passionate in his belief. And this is somewhat mysterious and puzzling, for the sermon is in conflict with his philosophical concepts. It is, in fact, as you pointed out, a denial of it. It also occurred to me that the story of Noah is the story of Ahab in reverse, but even that cannot be taken as ultimately true. Melville was carried away by the magnitude of his thought. Theologically, the book is a blasphemy. Ahab is at war with God, there is no question about this. He sees the mask of the whale as the mask that the deity wears. He sees the deity as a malignant, rational being that is out to torment the race of men and all other creatures. And Ahab is the world's dark champion who grapples with this omnipresent and enslaving force.

LAUROT: Without this dimension, *Moby Dick* would have been reduced to such an orthodox presentation of Good and Evil as is literally incarnated in the characters of Billy Budd and Claggart.

HUSTON: *Billy Budd* is indeed that, a very simple book, though a later one. *Moby Dick* says God is evil, or at least, Ahab says God is evil. The pragmatic-minded Starbuck interprets the blasphemy on a bourgeois level. He thinks that the mission of the whaler men is to furnish oil for the lamps of the world. But Ahab's blasphemy is even greater than Starbuck dreams.

LAUROT: You seem to be taken with the ideas in *Moby Dick* aside from its narrative as-

pect. I understand you began writing the script many years ago—is it the same script?

HUSTON: Yes and no. I wrote some parts of the scenario some years ago; then, I had my father in mind for the part of Ahab. I'd planned the script for years. Bradbury and I worked on the version that was used in the film. But the reflection of years has gone into it, so in some respects, I feel it to be close to my original conception.

LAUROT: Being such a compelling and original world, *Moby Dick* would demand a corresponding originality and forcefulness from the director, also. . .

HUSTON: That was my main preoccupation. I wanted to find fresh ways to deal with the substance of Melville's book. On the most obvious level—that of color—I tried to discover the tones that would tell *Moby Dick* as a picture—this particular picture and no other. So we devised a new color photography process and found a palette to paint Melville's story. We shot *Moby Dick* in Technicolor. From the color film we made two sets of negatives—one in color, one in black and white. The two negatives were printed together on the final print, achieving a completely new tonality. The dancing purples, for instance, are absent.

LAUROT: The rather amorphous, narrative construction of the book must have presented difficulties in dramatization.

HUSTON: Yes, we had to dramatize some of the narration, and aside from that, create dramatic situations. But always—without exception—they come from the book, although sometimes, from just an important line in the text. For example, Starbuck discovered through Ahab that the purpose of the voyage, so far as the master of the ship is concerned, is to kill *Moby Dick*. In the book, Ahab has a chart. In the film, the chart has been made into a scene. The original scene where he declared himself and what he conceived the white whale to be took place on the quarter deck where he spoke to the mariners and where they drank to the death of *Moby Dick*. In the picture, as they drink to the death of *Moby Dick*, the crew sees him for the first time, and he studies them. Then, after that, they have their first lowering, or engagement with the whales, and the barrels are stored in the hold. Starbuck goes to report to Ahab so many barrels, and then

Ahab shows him his charts. He believes he has discovered the movements of the whales around the world—"I know them as I know the veins of my arm." Starbuck sees this as a way of filling the hold in record time and Ahab says, "so we shall, once we have accomplished the bigger business." Starbuck ought to know what that business is. Then into that comes his accusation of blasphemy and the first revelation on Ahab's part—"Talk not to me of blasphemy, I'd strike the sun if it insulted me." That is what I meant about dramatizing the narrative. I hope the picture will be successful because production costs are in the millions and unfortunately, you can't get funds for anything that is in the least way a departure from the established pattern. When I went to Hollywood, there were only a few who had broken away from it—Flaherty, Murnau. *Trader Horn* was the one great adventurous undertaking. This represented the sum total of shooting done anywhere other than in Hollywood. My going to Mexico to shoot *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* was a big step for the studio to take. Now, the situation is completely changed—companies are shooting all over the world. So, the industry's decentralization and the growth of East Coast production, for instance, is encouraging. But it will be utterly meaningless if it does not bring about a complete breakaway from standard Hollywood patterns.

LAUROT: You seem to speak with intimate knowledge about the "patterns. . ."

HUSTON: Oh, the worst frost I ever had was with *The Red Badge of Courage*. It was "re-arranged," as you know. During the preview, large sections of the audience just left in the middle of one of the best scenes, the one in which the tall soldier dies and then the boy and the tattered soldier leave him. They tried to salvage what looked to them like a hopeless mess. *The Red Badge of Courage* was made during the Korean War and this might have had something to do with it. It was too much for audiences, they wanted no part of it. All their feelings were magnified by the Korean War. It had something to do with bad timing. Now, if somebody else comes along and wants to do something like *The Red Badge*, many would be opposed.

LAUROT: Before, when we talked about dramatisation, I recalled that some people won-

dered if you had attempted to shoot *Moby Dick* in accordance with the "style" that is commonly attributed to you—which, of course, might present certain limitations. . .

HUSTON: It is a curious thing that so many people ascribe to me a distinct style. Believe me, I am not conscious of any such thing. Whenever I undertake to direct a film, I do so out of the deep feeling that it inspires in me. It is precisely this feeling that dictates the way in which I direct a picture. It is a matter of spontaneous sensitivity. I direct actors as little as possible, and do not strive to impose a monotonous unity of style upon the whole. There may be some general principles that are abiding, but the rules are there only to be broken, not to be adhered to. The direction of a scene depends upon its quality as a scene. For example, we are having a certain kind of conversation right now. It is a spatial relationship that is directed by the thoughts. In photographing this scene, in composing, lighting and editing, this sort of encounter would be rendered according to the varying distances between the participants.

LAUROT: It's this freedom, then, from a preconception of style that keeps you from subordinating given situations, and that accounts for the spontaneous feeling of life. . .

HUSTON: Oh yes. This frees me to retain the particular style of the film—not my own "personal, permanent" style—and within the film, to create spontaneous variations of the style that make for unity and fortify the whole conception. I do not think any film-maker should—though many do—consciously strive to maintain a permanent style in all his films. This could be possible only if he made the same picture over and over again. Some styles, for example, Westerns, have become a noble convention; they tell the same kind of story in the same way and there is no reason to change this approach. From time to time, people say to me, "We'd like to see you make a Western." If I ever made a Western, I'd make the same kind of Western. I don't want to put my brand on the Western; it has its adequate style already.

LAUROT: Then would you agree with me that neo-realism is primarily an attitude toward life, rather than a style?

HUSTON: Certainly; I have the greatest ad-

miration for the neo-realist directors. De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* is an ever-renewed experience for me. He knows how to make people in his films behave naturally and yet he gives them the intensity of his vision.

LAUROT: It's all the more to be regretted, don't you think, that the American film-makers who have attempted an imitation of neo-realism have conceived it as a style rather than as a way of seeing the world which, in turn, would command an artistic interpretation.

HUSTON: That is true. Neo-realism has influenced many American film-makers, but their films, for example, on juvenile delinquency are juvenile, thematically superficial and self-conscious. They fail to understand that what matters is not a new method, but the return to the sources of life, of people, of society that the European neo-realists have effected. It all comes back to a matter of heart and vision, not only talent. So long as these elements are neglected, we shall not have films here made with the intensity and compassion of the neo-realists.

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## ELIA KAZAN



# ELIA KAZAN – THE GENESIS OF A STYLE

EUGENE ARCHER

*The camera focuses on a woman walking along the unpaved street of a small California town. She is a heavily veiled figure dressed in black, in ominous contrast to the subdued pastel backgrounds. The camera follows her purposeful movement across the street from left to right, then changes angle to observe gossiping bystanders whispering behind a shop window at the woman's passing reflection. Another cut and the viewpoint is reversed: the camera pans to follow the woman as she approaches from the right, then stops abruptly as she passes behind the figure of a white-clad blond boy. A sudden chord of music, coinciding with the camera's pause, concentrates the observer's attention on the boy. He stares after the woman's vanishing figure, then, unexpectedly, jumps to his feet and runs a few steps after her—then stops, as suddenly as he began. Cut to a close-up of the veiled woman, whose movement has not ceased; she crosses the screen in foreground, while the boy stares after her, hands in pockets, scuffing at the ground in an agony of indecision.*

Elia Kazan is a director with a distinctive personal style, and the opening sequence of *East of Eden* clearly illustrates its quality. Without a word of dialogue, conflict has been established and curiosity aroused. The contrast between the dark, mysterious, purposeful woman and the fair, ingenuous, hesitant youth is immediately apparent. The even flow of movement as the camera follows the woman is suddenly interrupted by the unexpected appearance of the boy; his abrupt actions and awkward pauses, emphasized by the camera and soundtrack, immediately suggest that the conflict is to be a violent one. Few films have begun with so vivid an example of visual symbolism.

An understanding of the visual nature of his medium is not the least of Elia Kazan's gifts. Kazan's record as a director has been impressive. Since 1945, he has directed eleven major films, most of them successful both artistically and commercially. Three of these were chosen best of the year by the New York Film Critics; two won

Academy Awards. Nine actors have won Academy Awards for performances in Kazan's films; twenty-one have been nominated. Kazan is one of the few directors whose name is recognized by the general public, and he has been rewarded by a freedom of action rare in Hollywood. Today, with the privilege of choosing his own subjects and casts without regard to box-office requirements, Kazan is assured of financial backing for any project he cares to undertake.

## Surface Realism

Kazan, unlike most Hollywood directors, served most of his apprenticeship on the stage. As a member of the Group Theatre, he acted in Clifford Odets plays with John Garfield, Lee J. Cobb, and other professionals who were later to be associated with him in Hollywood. In the early 1940's, Kazan played gangster roles in a few films, notably *City for Conquest*. His first major success came as a stage director, with the production of Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize play, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, in 1942. *One Touch of Venus*, *Harriet*, and *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* followed. By 1944, Kazan was recognized as one of the most promising directors on Broadway, and on the strength of this reputation he went to Hollywood to direct his first film for Twentieth Century-Fox.

*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* was an unusual assignment for a beginner. An adaptation of a popular novel, the film was allotted a high production budget, and was considered one of the studio's prestige films. The production was not an unqualified success, being handicapped by excessive length and an episodic quality which demonstrated that Kazan had not yet acquired a feeling for the overall timing and continuity of a motion picture. For a first attempt, however, the film was a remarkable achievement. Kazan's instinct for the medium was immediately apparent in the mobility of the camera work and in the sustained intensity of the dramatic scenes. The atmosphere of the Brooklyn slums of a nostalgically-remembered past was carefully evoked. Kazan's attention to detail—a quality which has

since become one of the trademarks of his style—was never more apparent than in the camera's perceptive examination of a second-hand iron bed with peeling paint, the holes in the rugs of the Nolans' flat, the hard lines plainly visible in the face of the heroine. Background music was notably absent, except for an organ-grinder playing popular songs of the period during the street scenes. The film's extreme realism, instead of emphasizing any falseness in the plot, served to make the sentiment more effective. The actors were believable and consistent in their characterizations, and Kazan kept them constantly in motion, occupied by innumerable bits of functional business—washing, playing games, cooking meals, scrubbing floors. This core of genuineness in the characters and settings made the film ultimately moving, in spite of a plot which was somewhat contrived. A number of powerful sequences stand out. The scene in which the family waits for the father, an amiable drunk, to return from a late wedding party, and pathetically attempts to make a party in the flat, is brilliantly devised: the hardening young mother, fighting to retain her love for her husband, encourages him to talk optimistically until she is unable to stand the situation any longer and screams for him to stop. The abrupt breaking of the mood in this scene reveals the alteration in the relationship of husband and wife. Another powerful and cogent scene shows the pregnant mother, writhing in labor, talking deliriously about her dead husband, while the listening daughter slowly awakens to a consciousness of their common affection. Such scenes are inherently theatrical, their ultimate effect deriving from acting and dialogue rather than from any basically cinematic qualities; but their success indicates not only Kazan's enormous talent for handling intense scenes but the intelligence with which he can integrate his theatricalism into an otherwise cinematic film.

After this excellent beginning, Kazan's second film, *The Sea of Grass*, was disappointing. The memory of this film must be embarrassing to Kazan today, for its complete lack of distinction, and the absence of any of the stylistic qualities which have subsequently come to be expected from Kazan, can be explained only by the director's unfamiliarity with the medium and his apparent lack of sympathy with his subject. The

story stems from the tradition of *Way Down East* and *East Lynne*: a young Eastern girl marries a cattle baron, finds him unresponsive, is attracted to a friend of the family, bears an illegitimate son, and is driven out into the cold. Employing a technique as tedious as the plot, Kazan contrived only one interesting effect: a long panning shot over vast acres of waving grass, as the Western hero explains the creation of his empire.

The failure of *The Sea of Grass* did little damage to Kazan's career. By 1947 he had staged such socially significant plays as *Deep Are the Roots* (the love story of a white Southern girl and a Negro soldier) and Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*; and his third film, *Boomerang!* established him securely in Hollywood. This was an essay in the new semi-documentary technique employed by Louis de Rochemont in *House on 92nd Street* and *13 Rue Madeleine*, which attained some popularity after the war. (Much of the impetus toward the new method came from the critical success in America of such neo-realistic films as *Open City* and *Shoeshine*.) De Rochemont's idea of neo-realism consisted of taking a story based on fact, photographing it in its actual locations, and producing a newsreel-like effect in a feature-length fiction film. Although this conception did not result in an American *Paisan*, the method was not without merit. Kazan proved to be the ideal director for such a project, and *Boomerang!* was well received. The story lacks depth—a district attorney decides the murder suspect he is prosecuting is innocent, and, against difficult political opposition, proves his point in court—but it is thoroughly convincing on the screen. While the film did not probe deeply into the human relations of its subject, it could nonetheless boast a surface realism far beyond that of most American films. *Boomerang!* was harshly photographed, well-acted by a cast composed largely of unfamiliar faces (most of the actors were stage professionals), and it steadily developed suspense toward its climax. Background music was not used. Although *Boomerang!* was not a significant social drama, it was a creditable directorial achievement, and it demonstrated, for the first time, Kazan's ability as a cinema technician.

Kazan's next film, *Gentleman's Agreement*, was Fox's "big" picture of 1947. This was an expensive production, with a well-known cast



and a major subject new to the screen, anti-Semitism. The film was extremely popular, and won the Academy Award and New York Film Critics' prize as "best picture" in a year which saw the release, in America, of *Great Expectations* and *Odd Man Out*. Unfortunately, the acclaim was not altogether justified. Kazan was obviously enthusiastic about his subject, but he was let down by his script—a slick and empty treatment (by Moss Hart) of a popular novel. The theme was impressive, but the hero, a crusading reporter who pretends to be Jewish, was unconvincing. Although the heroine, a snobbish but attractive sophisticate whose modern views on prejudice conceal her own inherent anti-Semitism, was an original creation (and made more so by the acting of Dorothy McGuire, who had given a memorable performance in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*), the resolution of the central problem turned into a typical lovers' quarrel solved by a last-scene clinch. The shallowness of the plot was emphasized by the realism of Kazan's technique; studiously avoiding "romantic" lighting and music, Kazan unwisely tried to present the story as a true and genuine one—which it glaringly was not. A more romantic treatment might have helped to disguise the artificiality of the dialogue; as it was, the film was boring and didactic. The uncompromising photography furthermore emphasized the inadequacy of the acting, which, except

for the performances of McGuire, John Garfield, and Celeste Holm, was undistinguished. *Gentleman's Agreement* was by no means a bad film, but it was a barely competent one. Significantly, after the timeliness of the subject had faded, a number of prominent critics who overrated the film at the time of its release began to reverse their judgments, with the result that the film today is criticized somewhat more than it deserves.

Kazan apparently learned something from *Gentleman's Agreement*, for since that film his work has never been static or dull. The interval following its release, however, was a crucial one, for Kazan returned to the stage to direct *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*. When the latter play opened, it was clear that Kazan, as director of the two most important dramatic plays of the modern American theater, had reached the peak of his stage career. Kazan still maintains that he is primarily a stage director, and that he accepts Hollywood employment only because of the shortage of good new plays. (He has continued to do excellent periodic work on such plays as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Tea and Sympathy*, and *Camino Real*.) Since 1948, however, Kazan has devoted his attention with increasing seriousness to motion pictures, as a medium yet to be conquered. The evidence of his new approach was immediately apparent.

(Continued on page 21)

## THE WESTERN – OLD AND NEW

GEORGE N. FENIN

*"I've labored long and hard for bread  
For honor and for riches  
But on my corns too long you've tread  
You fine-haired sons of bitches. . ."*

BLACK BART, THE PO-8  
(alias for Charles E. Bolton,  
Poet and Outlaw, who may have died  
in Nevada with his boots on).

### **The historical background**

During the American Revolution, the No-Man's land that lay between the American regular forces in the North and the New York encampment of the British in the South was known

as the Neutral Ground. It was a devastated country where two opposing partisan groups sought and battled each other in cruel and bloody skirmishes, forays, cattle and horse thievings. The guerrillas fighting for Washington's cause were called Skinners. These operating with the support of George the III's British dragoons were known as Cowboys, this name deriving from the English farm lads who cared for the cattle in the Surrey and Essex countrysides.

It was, in fact, not until several decades after the establishment of the Colonies' independence that the Cowboy became an American. In a few

years, he achieved the required status of maturity, graduated with honor into folklore and legend, and stood from then on as a living symbol of the Wild West, of the truly original American Frontier period. The transformation of the word's meaning was complete. From the bucolic atmosphere of the British farms to the horrors of partisan warfare in the American East to the conquest of untamed land in the West, the term Cowboy finally came to synthesize the "grandeur et servitude" of one of the most amazing events in history. For the swiftness and proportion of the Westward march of colonization can only be matched by the Russian conquest of Siberia, begun by the great Yermak in 1579 and highlighted in 1638 by the founding of Ochotsk, an event that brought the Slavs to the shores of the Pacific, after they had crossed an entire continent.

The American trek to the West and the leap to the Pacific started to materialize in the fifty years following 1770. When the great Anglo-Saxon immigration declined, there came German political refugees, discontented Englishmen, starving Irish and Italians, adventurous Russians and Poles—all of whom looked to the New Land with hope. They were the advance patrol of an army of 35 million immigrants that was to land on American shores in the 19th century, filling those Eastern cities deserted by Americans who had migrated to virgin lands, or simply followed in the wake of the Westward, Ho! march.

Thus, in an incredibly short time, the colonists and farmers of the Oregon and Overland Trails learned the cattle trade from the Mexican vaqueros in California, and Santa Fe routiers tasted the acrid sense of competition with the Russians and the British in their development of the Fur Trade Empire. With the discovery of gold, farmers and merchants became adventurers; with the advance of railroads, they became buffalo hunters; with the establishment of property (great land and great cattle) they wore guns and fought on opposite sides of the barbed wire fence—the era's symbol of revolution and change.

The shrinkage of the wide, open spaces brought about the rapid and progressive destruction of the "Permanent Indian Frontier," and in a few years, the American Indian and the American Bison were forced to relinquish their prairies. Shortly after the turn of the century, this great

colonization and expansion, following (as Carl Schurz publicly stated in 1871) rigidly isothermic lines, ceased its marauding and settled down. A great event in the Union's history had taken place. From then on, the Frontier was no longer "contemporary time," but the best and most efficient proof of the vitality of a new nation, of its dynamic imperialism based on racial arrogance, economic realism, and wistful idealism.

Its impact on successive decades of American life and progress has amply proved the Frontier's existence in the hearts and minds of Americans as something much more fascinating than a splendid period of history. The Frontier is, in fact, the only mythological tissue available to this young nation. Its gods and semi-gods, their passions and ideals, the fatality of events, the sadness and glory of death, the struggle of Good and Evil—all these archaic themes have found in the Western myth the ideal ground for a liaison with the Olympic world, in a refreshing symbiosis between Hellenic thought and Yankee dynamism. The Frontier for the American is what the "Risorgimento e Garibaldi" are for the Italians, Peter the Great for the Russians, July 14, 1789 for the Frenchman, Mohammed for the Islam. This epoch represents the combined, collective efforts of great and different masses of people, sparked with the manifestations of a striking individualism. It is an era in which the American believes, for his intellectual and physical approach to it is, on a personal basis, fully satisfied. The individualist finds a saturation of ideals in the conquest of Nature and the law of the gun. And the collectivist realizes that the Frontier movement took the combined efforts of masses to plough the earth, raise satisfactory hoof and horn cattle, create towns and cities.

The Frontier that became a state of thinking, born of actual past events in the West, was gradually received with enthusiasm in the Eastern states through a literary tradition formed by such writers as Washington Irving, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Owen Wister, O. Henry, Stewart Edward White, A. B. Guthrie, Stuart Lake, Francis Parkman, Mari Sandoz, and Walter Van Tilburg Clark. Old and new fiction of quality now perpetuate the saga, while a tabloid industry goes on printing pulp centered about the deification and glamorization of an otherwise drab and grim pioneer activity.

### ***The West in Film***

And the motion pictures? It is highly indicative that the first American story film was Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, and that for 53 years since the showing of that classic, Hollywood has concentrated heavily on the Western, be it Grade A film or "oater." Perhaps it was realized that here is the most American of cinematic themes, and that the Western really represents—in the words of the Italian film critic Giulio Cesare Castello—"a common patrimony, because among all themes it is perhaps, in its primitivity, the most universal one."

The mythological, human, social and dramatic appeal of the Frontier justified the predominance of this theme in film's early period. Psychology appeared first with Bronco Billy, later with the remarkable activity of William S. Hart. Westerns lengthened with Griffith's *The Massacre* and Cecil B. De Mille's *The Squaw Man*. With the advent of the scourge of "horse opera," standardization degraded the rich dramatic resources of the Frontier, and only occasionally was it possible to see fine Westerns such as *The Covered Wagon*, *The Iron Horse*, *Cimarron*, *Stagecoach*, and a handful of others.

Growing trends toward assembly-line studio-bound mass production kept Hollywood further and further from life and from true creativity. The Grade B Western, shot out of doors, "in the rough," nevertheless saved the day. Ernest Callenbach comments that, "in a sense, therefore, the Western provided a link of continuity from the earliest years of the cinema to the later work of the documentary school; in their unassuming simplicity, they supplied evidence that the real world could furnish abundant drama for the camera."

The monotonous round of battles, of bad men and "Injuns" freely and instinctively mowed down, of Last Stands against the hordes of Geronimo, Sitting Bull and Cochise continued for years, completely distorting the true Frontier spirit. In the light of this, it is not surprising that a study conducted in 1942 by the Motion Picture Research Bureau among 2 thousand respondents in 45 towns found that a percentage of 6.9 men liked the Western, but that 7.4 men disliked it, and that the proportion was even worse among women: 1.5 in favor, 14.4 against.\*

### ***The New Approach***

With the global disaster of the second World War, the Hollywood film saw a restoration of the Frontier in its own proper proportion. The rapid advance of technology and the attendant retrogression of the world's moral and intellectual values were contributing factors to the appearance of a truly remarkable film, instituting the new Western. *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943) by William Wellman was an extraordinary experiment in social comment. Its authenticity, dignity and respect for the agonies of a race of pioneers, seen as human beings both noble and flawed, destroyed forever the ludicrous stage on which for years the horse opera had played to exasperated Americans. The Frontier of a grim, grey and dedicated humanity, presented in terms of a day-by-day chronicle that exposed and made credible its passions, drew an immediate response of recognition. The psychological and social drama followed in *The Gunfighter* and *High Noon*, while Ford tried to tell the true story of Custer's last stand in *Fort Apache*. The rehabilitation of the Indian became paramount. But Delmer Daves' *Broken Arrow* overbalanced in this direction, and as a result, several successive films assigned malice to the white man exclusively, exalting the Red-skin. Although failures from a serious historical and sociological standpoint, films like *Sitting Bull* and *Cochise* nonetheless demonstrate a healthy desire to approach the actual Frontier milieu from a radically different point of view. The Indian has started to project his importance in the thematic Western, very much as the Negro in Southern literature has become, in Callenbach's phrase, "a moral problem and a symbol."

And moral issues and symbols are appearing in an increasing number of films. The Western theme is of itself no longer exploited merely as a commercial product in which the treatment of a universal event appears purely superficial and unconscious. Today, the majority of Westerns are still commercial (after all, Hollywood makes them) but the renewed knowledge that the Western has come of age, that the splendid era to which it refers has yet an impressive array of events to display, to offer, and to be considered in the motion picture, has not failed to impress

\* "Hollywood looks at its audience," by Leo A. Handel, page 124. Univ. Ill. Press.

certain directors. George Stevens has recognized the mythology of the Frontier saga in *Shane*, a Western of a Western, and Fred Zinnemann, with his *High Noon*, has provided us with an allegory of McCarthyism at its apex.

### ***The Sur-Western***

André Bazin, in "Cahiers du Cinema" (Christmas 1955) calls attention to the *Sur-Western*, and to the recent tendencies toward a *romanisation* of Frontier themes. I personally find the expression a happy one. It is exactly this concept of the Sur-Western that is the basis for the remarkable experiments of Anthony Mann, Nicholas Ray, Edward Dmytryk, Richard Aldrich, etc. Perhaps in time they will achieve, through sensitivity, cultural research, and genuine enthusiasm, an original approach to the fundamental "Discours sur la Methode du Western," a new direction for the expression of the American saga in cinematic, cultural and social terms. But the difficulties of rehabilitating the Frontier spirit in films are many and relevant. Let us not forget the pulp magazines, the comic strips, the "Cowboy's Ten Commandments," the facile routine of sheriffs and rustlers that still penetrate the conscience of our young and adult generation. And let us bear in mind the hostility of many producers to social themes. It is rather preferred that the French sociologist write about the Westerner as a frustrated man who finds satisfaction and a safety valve in releasing the charge of his gun, a typical phallic symbol. Yes, the Westerner had this puritanical inhibition and constriction, but he did not deliver himself of it only through shooting. Hollywood, horrified, has not explained this particularly vital situation to us. But recently, a marvelous sequence in Robert Wise's *Tribute to a Bad Man* gives us a glimpse. This Western depicts the adventures of a cattle owner who imposes his own law by the dire necessities of life in a wild country. At one point, the camera shows us a group of cowhands, resting on their bunks on the ground floor, while on the floor above, the woman of the boss is playing the piano. Finally the music stops. In the silence, the men look at each other and express their thoughts. Upstairs, a man and a woman are starting to consummate their rite of love, while the cowboys are left to their lonely physical and psychological traumas. It is an example

of sound cinematic treatment, well worth the hope of those—and there are many—who believe in the adult Western, in the true Frontier description, and not in the so-called adult, sophisticated fare, trashily adjectivized by the publicity departments of the movie companies.

Yes, there are many difficulties. Take *The Last Hunt*. Richard Brooks could have made a fine Western out of this story of the buffalo hunters, those men that, in less than thirty years, impoverished the American fauna by sixty million buffalo. But the paranoid instincts attributed to Robert Taylor as a killer, the saccharine love story of an Indian woman, played by Debra Paget, inhibit the film throughout, and drain it of its most vital content. Yet it is an interesting experiment, and the documentary sequences showing the periodic annihilation of some of the three thousand buffalo surviving today provide us with an unforgettable vision of those times, as lived by a different breed of men. *Man Without a Gun* is another compelling film; here the role of town-tamer (a professional killer hired by towns to bring law on a "pay as you live" basis) is brought to the attention of both the Frontier aficionado or scholar.

A somewhat romantic old-timer remembers that the cowboys "were dressed differently, they had their own language, code and costume. They lived by the gun and they died by the gun. There were seldom any cowards among them. They loved best the open range, the sky, the mountain and the breathless expanse of their wild, untamed land. . ." But they were also human beings, freed only recently, in the movies, from a conformist shell and presented in their genuine values. If the present trend continues, the basic Westerns of today may constitute a rocky surface on which talented and sensitive men of new thinking will be able at last to dedicate their efforts with a respect due the Frontier as a dynamic part of American heritage, as a symbol of an historical phenomenon, as a cultural expression of a universal mythology that may encompass all geographical and human barriers, spreading the knowledge—an accurate knowledge, at last—of the authentic "homo Americanus." Only then, could the vehement verses of Black Bart, the PO-8, no longer be applied to dishonest manipulators of the Western spirit.

# CANNES FESTIVAL – DAY BY DAY

LOTTE H. EISNER

MONDAY, APRIL 23: Opening of the festival delayed because of the Monaco wedding which nobody on the "côte" wants to hear mentioned again!

We begin with *Marie Antoinette*, a film by Jean Delannoy; its spirit produced a shock: for the opening of the festival, we rose to hear the Marseillaise, then were shown, in all its bloodier aspects, the revolution itself, with the rights of man championed by rabid incendiaries and unruly *sansculottes*. The vindication of a weak king who would rather have been a locksmith, the quasi-innocent romance of Marie Antoinette, coldly played by Michele Morgan, and a Fersen clumsily acted by Richard Todd—none of these save a cause which is lost . . . also cinematically. If the great Griffith sided with the aristocrats in *Orphans of the Storm*, if the great Dreyer saw only atrocities in *Pages Torn from the Book of Satan*—they had at least their talent to exonerate them. The direction of this film is colorless; it bores, and the less said about it, the better. The same applies to the Hungarian short, *Gypsy Dance*, in which one senses only the artificiality of stage flats and shabby ballet on film. But, as in the music hall, the first number is often a mediocrity, so as to allow the audience to settle itself. The festival is only beginning. . .

TUESDAY, APRIL 24: A short from the Netherlands, *Et La Mer N'était plus*, a good color film by Haanstra describing the Zuyder Zee reclamation project; it reminds one of Joris Ivens' marvelous film. Then a Japanese film by Minorou Shibuya, *The Bronze Christ*. This is a self-consciously spectacular film in which some Japanese, converted to Christianity in the 18th century, become martyrs. Perhaps it was the strange comingling of Christianity and an ethic proper to the Orient that left us cold. In the evening, the Czechoslovak *Jiri Trnka's Marionettes*, an exciting visit to the studio of this great manipulator of tiny figures. Then, a festival highlight: *Othello*, by the Soviet director, Serge Youtkevitch. Here there is none of Orson Welles' arbitrariness, nor the perambulating style of Olivier's *Hamlet*, but something truly Shakespearean, a great breadth, a heroic spirit that engulfs us. Youtkevitch expands the Shakespearean stage to encompass the natural world; there are storms, the ocean with its roaring waves, sails, ample cloaks billowing in the wind. This is no "formalism;" it is in the great tradition of *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*. Youtkevitch has inherited from Eisenstein a powerful sense of imagery, of eloquent form, plasticity, and rhythmic cutting. His previous training as an art director shows in his uncontrived handling of an actual medieval castle, and, when he must use studio sets, his clever play of light reflections makes walls and windows built of staff look credible. His Venice is not an opalescent one, perhaps, but Cyprus comes to life as a dramatic reality. At times, his compositions attain the linear clarity of a Florentine Quattrocento painting; at other times, the softer Venetian style of Bellini. He never imitates, but masters the color and transposes it into visions of his own. There is a wonderful scene in which the Moor and Iago cross a beach where fishermen's nets become the strangling web that Iago's treachery spins about the great soul of Othello. If Youtkevitch has seen Welles' *Othello*, he nevertheless has gone his own road.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25: After a Yugoslav short, *Nicola Tesla*, (in which the odd assortment of documents assembled without method serves to show how not to make biographical films) a Hungarian film, *A Little Holiday Merry-go-round* by Zoltan Fabri. This film is a surprise; it begins a bit conventionally—a farmer leaves the collective farm. Then we see the carousel turn—and a love story, in which the individual and individual happiness come to the foreground.

It is told with great freshness and with simple and touching poetry. In the evening, *Wonders of Manhattan*, a gaudy American travel agency short. After that, *The Girl in Black* by the young Greek director Michael Cacoyannis. As in last year's *Stella*, Cacoyannis' choice of subject and actors is discerning and personal. He shows himself beautifully capable of atmospheric intensity, of lending life to the milieu of the young Greek idlers on a fishing island, of sustaining the exciting drama through to a discreetly suggested happy ending. Elli Mabeti, the girl in black, has an expressive face that is strangely arresting.

THURSDAY, April 26: A short from Canada, *The Shepherd*, as boring as it is lovely. Then, equally dull, an overlong film from India, *Moral Heritage*, by S. Athavale; it's a long-winded family saga in which an attempt to incorporate folklore fails. The Belgian *Les Mouettes Meurent au Port* by Rik Kuypers, Ivo Michiels, and R. Verhavert, falls in its so-called avantgarde pretensions. *L'Affaire Protar*, a Roumanian film by H. Boros and M. Teodoresco, is based on a most amusing idea, but the direction is slow and clumsy. Like the Hungarian film, this one is also concerned with the well-being of the individual and not of the community.

FRIDAY, APRIL 27: After a short from South Africa, *Fishermen of the Cape*—proving again that very few countries are capable of films that truly represent them—a Czechoslovak film by Vaclav Kraska, *Dalibor*, to Smetana's music. Here we are again confronted with the ennui that complete filmed opera can induce, although the Soviet *Boris Godunov*, shown last year at Venice, went far to offset it by the use of ellipsis.

In the evening, the Norwegian *Karius and Batus* with two little puppets; this is a short that is supposed to tell Norwegian children to brush their teeth properly. Since Wednesday, by the way, we have been having a little festival of cartoons whose creators represent numerous countries. Every afternoon we see films of all kinds: marionette films by Trnka, Hofmann, Zeman from Czechoslovakia, and Haupe from Poland; cartoons by the Russians Ivanov-Vano, Atamanov, Pastchenko, and excellent ones by the Frenchman Grimault; the *films de découpage* by Henri Gruel; ingenious films by Alexeieff; little gems by McLaren, and some by George Dunning, also from Canada; and from America, a few of Disney's and the highly amusing UPA films. Of course, there are those that have already become classics, such as *L'Idée* by Bartosch, *A Night on Bare Mountain* by Alexeieff, and a silhouette film by Lotte Reiniger. We regret McLaren's absence, but the others are here, and in the morning congregate to discuss their points of view and exchange information. Philip Stapp, whose *Boundary Lines* we liked so much, is here; and from England, John Halas, whose extracts from *Animal Farm*, in their heaviness and vulgar coloring, look too much like certain of Disney's more regrettable creations. An exhibition of animated films at the Miramar Hotel is most instructive, though it lacks the poetry of the one Henri Langlois arranged at the Cinémathèque Française in 1945.

Friday evening and *I'll Cry Tomorrow* by Daniel Mann. Susan Hayward's acting is interesting, but the film left all the critics, as they confessed afterwards, in a state of thirst.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28. After another travel agency short from Luxembourg, *Aéroport*, comes that marvel of deep sea diving, *Le Monde du Silence* by Jacques Yves Cousteau, wherein the enchanted mysteries of the depths are discovered, bathed for the first time in a light that awakens their dream-like colors. In the evening, a Soviet short, simple, instructive, and with a stunning soundtrack—*The Tovaritch Goes to Sea*, a story of a training ship. Then a long Brazilian film *Under*

*the Bahia Sky*, by Ernesto Romani. Its fault, as with so many South American films, is that it strains too emphatically after the lovely melodramatic image. And it is further spoiled by a sort of Tarzan who is very conscious of his male beauty.

SUNDAY, APRIL 29: An insignificant Danish short, *Waters of the Euphrates*. Then Mark Robson's *The Harder They Fall*, which interests those who appreciate an American film that dares to denounce (as did last year's *The Big Knife*) certain forms of moral turpitude in the United States. In the evening, a short, also from America: *The Face of Lincoln*; pity the sculptor has so little talent. *Il Ferroviere*, the latest film by the young Italian Pietro Germi, is marred by the script in which misfortunes accumulate, and by the central situation of the father, seen and judged by his eight-year-old son, reminding one too much of the deeper father-son relationship in *Bicycle Thief*. Yet Germi has talent. Ought neo-realism seek new expression? A Hungarian film, *Discord*, seen *hors festival*, shows what other countries have learned from the Italian school. A great deal may be expected of Hungarian production. In this one, there is the same pleasing freshness and simplicity that we liked in the other Hungarian film.

In the afternoon, *Nuit et Brouillard*, the film on concentration camps by one of the most gifted of young French directors, Alain Resnais. Complaints from the German delegation caused the film to be withdrawn from the festival. A few German journalists told me how embarrassed they were over the incident. Yet, scheduled to be shown is a film from West Germany, *Nacht ohne Sterne* by Kautner, which is liable to offend Soviet feelings because it deals with the thorny problem of tensions between the two Germanies. To point the situation further: we know that England is not showing *A Town Like Alice*, so as not to offend the Japanese. Poland has withdrawn, in a spontaneous and generous gesture, the short *Sous un Même Ciel* which shows the taking of Warsaw by the Germans; and Finland has withdrawn its *Unknown Soldier*, so as not to irritate the Russians. Why do the Germans not make a similar gesture? Apparently, it was necessary for the festival committee to beg them to withdraw their film on the strength of Article 3 of its statutes which states that a film that has already been exploited may not be presented at the festival, and Article 5 which states that a film must not offend any nation present. Yesterday there was a rumor that the German delegation was leaving the festival. Today it has been confirmed.

MONDAY, April 30: In the morning, *hors festival* and before its premiere in Tokio (which may never take place) a Japanese film, *Mabiru No Ankoku* (*Shadows in Broad Daylight*) by Tadasha Imai. The violent script (about a judicial error caused by the police's use of the Third Degree and in which innocents are condemned in a foul crime case) is by Shinobu Hashimoto, who wrote the scenarios for *Rashomon* and *Seven Samurai*. Its producer is the one who produced *Children of Hiroshima*. *Mabiru No Ankoku* is a courageous and well-made film, with characters drawn true to life. The Japanese delegation will have nothing to do with it because, like all countries, they do not like the rotten points of the system laid bare. But this film is a thousand times superior to *The Bronze Christ*; it is in the tradition of genuine Japanese neo-realism, like certain other films we admired last year at Venice.

Next, a somewhat nondescript Belgian short on the composer André Modeste Gretry; then the Egyptian film *La Sangsue* (*The Bloodsucker*) by Salah Abou Seif. There has been a decisive broadening in Egyptian production which, until recently, ran chiefly to melodrama and violent crime films. In this story of a young student who is seduced by his landlady and set free by force of circumstance, the narrative is cinematically conceived; there is humor, a certain freshness, the characters stand out—all this without any pseudo-folklore. Tahia Carioca is excellent as the landlady, and does not overact.

A delightful Polish short, *Au Rendez-Vous des Marionnettes*, and then Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, which

does not come up to his former film of the same name.

TUESDAY, MAY 1. The international assembly of Cinéma d'Animation concludes with a press conference which provides no more by way of information than the screening of the films themselves. Fact to note: Paul Grimault, whose masterpiece *Le Petit Soldat* could not be presented, tells us that, except for some occasional publicity films, he has not made a new cartoon in five years. Is there really no possibility for the film cartoonist in France? Alexeieff also makes only publicity films a few minutes in length. The United States and Canada have sufficient means for such production; when will France follow their example and come to the aid of producers like Grimault, Alexeieff and Gruel?

This afternoon we saw a Japanese short, *The Palace of Katsura*; the color was charming and discreet. Afterwards, one of those romanticized composer biographies which, since *The Unfinished Symphony*, no one can endure. This one also comes to us from Austria—alas!—*Mozart* by Karl Hartl. Excellent performances of Mozart's music do not offset insipid direction and script.

Evening. A Soviet short *Melodie du Festival*, showing a festive gathering of youth from all over the world; here, again, there is an interesting use of sound. The Swedish film *Sommarnattens Leende* brings everyone out smiling, save the puritans. It is a Swedish *Marivaudage*, witty, flirtacious, daring, and though it is rather a filmed comedy, there is a certain humorous sense of rhythm. Too frivolous to win a prize? It brightened the somewhat ponderous sobriety of the festival!

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3. A short film in CinemaScope which certainly deserves a prize: *Golden Parable* by the young Sicilian Vittoria de Seta. Images and sounds are vested with an extraordinary power. The broad format is justified and necessary, even. Then *Poème Pédagogique*, by the Soviets A. Malioukov and M. Maieskaia, on the re-education of vagrant and abandoned children in 1920. It has the same theme as the classic *Road to Life* by Nicholas Ekk, but is less convincing. In the older film, the evolution of children into citizens was slower and more logical. However this film is certainly not a remake, and there are beautiful lyrical passages.

This evening, a 50-minute Hungarian film, *Kai and the Wild Cat*, with some nice animal scenes. But it is too talkative and too long. On the other hand, Clouzot's long-awaited *Le Mystère Picasso* is not long enough. It is a passionate study of a great painter's creativity; the painter is never satisfied, he reshapes, erases, paints over his original composition, transforms endlessly in a constant search for the idea behind the object—a poet of the paintbrush. We were also able to see a didactic film by the Belgian Paul Haesaerts, *A Visit to Picasso*, and the rather disappointing *Picasso* by Luciano Emmer, to whom we owe a fine film on Hieronymus Bosch. Here, Clouzot stands aside to let Picasso do just as he wished. It is the film Picasso has dreamed of for years. Special, seemingly-magic inks permeate both sides of the canvas, behind which the camera

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is stationed, so that we see a work as it actually takes shape. An interesting method, though we also enjoy following the artist's hand as it shapes his designs. This film makes us visualize, as perhaps never before, the various stages of the creative process.

THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 3. A short by Albert Lamorisse of *White Mane*. Again a story of a little boy, this time in the city. *Le Ballon Rouge*, a fairytale-like story of a little Parisian enormously pleased the delicate souls who resented the Picasso film. It tends toward insincerity, but is charming and will surely win a prize. *Le Cheval Fantôme* by Maboroschi Nouma is also a small boy's story, a little Japanese who trains a colt to become a racehorse. There are some pleasant passages involving children, but also, a dangerous tendency of the Japanese production to ape the American manner. European clothes disfigure, and though a few backgrounds reveal the art of a nation of great landscape painters, we miss the colors of *Gate of Hell*.

FRIDAY, MAY 4. This morning, *hors festival*, a gay film by Emmer, the *Bigamist*. The first part, especially, has the same kind of humor as *Sunday in August*. Emmer is capable of the juiciest descriptions of Roman *petits bourgeois*; one laughs a great deal. In the afternoon, a 50-minute documentary by a young Italian woman living in England, Lorenza Mazetti. *Together* is a study of two deaf-mutes; it succeeds in building an atmosphere that, like the London fog, envelops their poignant and desperate story. The director has talent; she has caught the noisy London world of workmen, factories, docks and pubs, through which these two beings move, noticing nothing. A most unusual film in this festival and one that merits a prize—an official encouragement of more films outside the conformist pattern into which have lapsed so many of today's so-called documentaries. Will festivals ever rise above the mediocrity of these travel agency productions, and will they ever appreciate the beauty of de Seta's Sicilian films, a program of which, one morning at the Pantheon in Paris, deeply moved the few people gathered there. And will they recognize the younger film-makers, such as Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and this Lorenza Mazetti, who are working in a period far more difficult than the great pre-war epoch of British documentaries, when films were much cheaper to make.

The full-length film *Walk into Paradise* is one of those detestable hybrid types which cannot make up its mind to be a feature film because its makers have chosen the picturesque background of a country where folklore comes ready-made, and where the quasi-documentary is commercially employed. Australia is responsible for this one by the Italian Marcel Pagliero who has to his credit some excellent films. Here, however, he attempts the kind of romanticized expedition film that the United States so often produces and for which one must have the talent of a John Ford. A dreadful Roumanian cartoon, *Le Boulon de Marinica* had best go unmentioned; so with a pedestrian and interminable "short" from Austria. *Impressions de Salzbourg*, in which beautifully performed music accompanies an idiotic montage of hideous colors. Then there's the film about the Ruth Ellis case and capital punishment—*Yield to the Night*, by J. Lee Thompson. For England, this seems a courageous film; the direction is honest, and the suspense of the wait-for-death is effectively symbolized by a door without a knob. The policewomen, typically English lower middle class and without imagination or sensitivity, are seen with a certain irony. But Diana Dors is not a good enough actress, although at times she resembles Hertha Thiele, of *Madchen in Uniform*, with her pouting, parched mouth and her face untouched by make-up. Bad acting outside of prison—it is in these scenes, above all, that one notices the limitations of this well-intentioned director.

SATURDAY, MAY 5. Press conference with King Vidor who talks to us about his new film, *War and Peace*, made in Italy. We had the chance to tell him that we had been able to see his wonderful film *The Crowd* once more at the Cinématique Française, and how sorry we were that his fine

*Halleluja*, shown in a Paris cinema, has reached us in such a mutilated state. The more we see of today's films, the more we realize that we must preserve in its original form our cinematic inheritance from the past. In the afternoon two commonplace films by the Bulgarian Bolan Danowski, *First Point* and *Order of the Day*, a film about a little girl who gets lost in the big city. Then *Hanka*, a Yugoslav film by Slavko Vorkapic, a melodramatic story about a young gypsy and her love. In the evening *The Creation of the World*, a cartoon film based on drawings by the humorist Jean Effel. The animation spoils somewhat the humor of these drawings which we had enjoyed seeing in the newspaper instead of the trivial comic strips. *Tant qu'il y aura des Bêtes*, a first film by the excellent Parisian photographer Brassai, is a well-edited and unusually sensitive picture of the private lives of animals. Then *Mother*, a Soviet film by Marc Donskoi. It is not really a remake of Pudovkin's *Mother*. But one cannot help thinking of the great purity of line and the perfect unity of Pudovkin's work, particularly as it is the nephew of the actor Batalov who plays the part of the son. Donskoi, whose Gorki trilogy we liked, was certainly the man to make a film out of Maxim Gorki's *Mother*. But there are too many themes in this new script, too much dialogue based on theoretical problems, and it lacks that power leading towards tragedy to be found in Pudovkin's film. What we had already noticed about *Poème Pédagogique* becomes even more evident here. Unlike the development of the young street boys in *Road to Life*, a single punch from an exasperated teacher was enough to awaken their conscience. The same applies to Donskoi's *Mother*. In Pudovkin's film she awakens gradually; the beaten, frightened woman must pass through many stages before understanding the cause of the people. Here everything moves too fast and the psychology is thus weakened. Besides this we realize how dangerous the use of color is for certain subjects that are too close to our time. Realistic subjects become tainted with a painful naturalism; there is always a tendency to make old fashioned color-prints. (The same might be noted about Japanese films situated in our era.) An artist as cultured and sensitive as Youtkevitch is aware of this danger. He told me that he is going to shoot his next film in black and white because the subject is not suited to color treatment. However, in Donskoi's film, all the shots of nature, of landscapes where colors blossom or delicately merge, are very beautiful.

SUNDAY, MAY 6. A medium-length Soviet film *Magdanda's Little Donkey* is about a poor woman and her children who find a dying donkey; they nurse it and then the rich man takes it away from them. It is told simply and naturally, and the children are delightful. This makes up for the camera-conscious little starlet in yesterday's Bulgarian film. Next *Gli Innamorati* by the Italian Mauro Bolognini. It is a pleasant film in the light manner of certain neo-realistic works in which daily life appears sketched with a somewhat facile hand, and in which cinematic condensation is lacking. Then the Cinématique Française presents *Homage to Alexander Korda*, an anthology of extracts directed and produced by him. One is surprised to see that some films by this quite average director have improved with time and distance. This is particularly the case with *The Private Life of Don Juan*. We also saw two fragments which von Sternberg shot for Korda's unfinished *I, Claudius* and we regret that this film was never finished. There is a surprising freshness and humor in these few sequences which have nothing of the waxworks rigidity of so many films based on classical antiquity. Laughton is at his best. In the evening *The Shadow*, a feature length detective film by the Polish Jerzy Kawalerowicz. It is well constructed and told in a truly cinematic way with clever suspense. The feature length Mexican film by Alfredo B. Crevenna, *The Wish (Talpa)*, is boring with its grandiloquent images and false pathos. A procession and religious dances could have been beautiful, but the color is too loud. One fondly remembers Eisenstein's beautiful though mutilated film on Mexico.

MONDAY, MAY 7. Accumulation of films, as is usual

in the last days of the festival. In the morning *The Unknown Fugi*, a Japanese short about the birds, insects and little animals of the famous mountain. An innate sense of color in the profusion of images. Here and there, shots of a tree-branch with a bird perched on it against a flat background, or a field with a line of peasants crossing it, looking like ancient wood-cuts. In the Bulgarian short *The Town of Tinova*, some beautiful and well-lit shots are mixed with some horrible 19th century historical pictures. We see, too, how a film can be ruined by a conventional and pompous commentary. Then a feature-length Argentinian film *The Last Dog*, which is a kind of Western with Indian raids. It is not too badly directed but is spoiled by the color which is at once flat and harsh. In the afternoon a very dull and talkative Japanese film *If the Birds Knew* (*Ikimono no kiroku*) by Akira Kurosawa, which pleads a roundabout case against the atomic bomb. But the obstinate old egoist who wants to leave Japan simply to save his own skin and who finally goes mad does not hold our interest. The neo-realistic Japanese film would seem to be on a dangerous decline if we did not know that there are other films such as the one we saw *hors festival*.

Here is the discovery of the festival: *Lament of the Road* (*Pather Panchali*) from India. A Bengali film by Satyajit Ray, who, incidentally, worked with Jean Renoir on *The River*. Here is great purity and a surprising cinematic lyricism. It is one of those rare works in which nothing seems to happen, but where we feel that we are being given a piece of life itself, unembellished, where we see before our eyes people living their daily lives with their small joys and their great affliction. All this without false exoticism, honestly and without exaggerating the facts. The bitter life of a poor family in Bengal: the mother wearing herself out at her daily work, the father a lazy dreamer, and two children who discover their forest and whose greatest delight is to follow the candy-man to see others taste the sweets. The director does not go looking for beautiful pictures, they come to him quite naturally; his people, who are not professional actors, have an extraordinary presence, simply living their real lives. And through them nature comes to life; the landscape and the rains of the monsoon are all part of their destiny. Satyajit Ray, the Flaherty of Bengal, undertook this film back in 1952, along with a few friends, non-professional like himself, and an amateur photographer. After three months their funds ran out. In 1955 he was able to resume his work with the help of the government of West Bengal. It is a film worthy of a grand prize. After it *Seven Years in Tibet* seems paltry indeed. This piece of reporting by Hans Nieter and Walter Ulbrich, which has caused such a stir, is presented to us by Great Britain. It is not the uneven camerawork—which can be expected in certain expedition films and from an inexperienced cameraman—but the spirit that shocks us. The Austrian adventurer, Heinrich Harrer enters the holy and forbidden city of Lhasa with all the racial arrogance of the superior white gentleman, despising those who do not know the great civilization of hot running water (it is mentioned in the commentary). He looks upon them as strange animals, follows their processions and their rites without understanding, love or respect. Everywhere he intrudes, exchanges, as he says, looks of complicity with the Dalai-Lama, so much so that one begins to doubt the authenticity of the pictures shown, and to wonder if these are not merely actors dressed up in these magnificent costumes.

Then the Spanish film *Tarde de Toros* by Ladislao Vajda, who had already shown us in *Marcellino, Pane y Vino* that he is a very clever and commercial director. Same commercial cleverness in this new film; this time he measures out for the box office the right proportions of religion and bullfight thrills, just as in the other film he combined the emotion produced by a child playing, unaware of the camera, and a (would-be) miracle.

TUESDAY, MAY 8. *Sous un Même Ciel* (edited by K. Weber) the Polish film on the Warsaw ghetto that was withdrawn, is an overwhelming indictment of Nazi brutality,

soberly wrought, but powerful in its use of footage the Nazis themselves shot. The whole terrible struggle is here—mass extermination, the heroism of human resistance, the final burning of the city: it should be seen by everyone. So too, with Alain Resnais' accusing *Nuit et Brouillard*, which was shown with the Polish film. The Resnais film has music by Hans Eisler who also wrote the score for Ivens' *Zuyder Zee*; it deserves mention for a melodious richness that is almost classical and for the way it is employed as an emphatic contrast to the soul-tearing scenes of the film.

After this, a series of very bad shorts was insupportable. One Indian film on cocoanut culture I was lucky enough to miss, but was just in time, unfortunately, for yet another travelogue, *Portrait de Sud*, showing New Zealand at its worst and augmented by the most inept commentary conceivable. Next, a well meant but tedious Hindu short, *The Rights of Man*, with documents of all sorts. *Salut à la France* showed the American art exhibit in Paris; its color was poor, and an English short *To Antarctic Ports* was uninteresting. It does seem as though the festival officials could exercise more discrimination with entries, by way of preselection. This would spare critics the pain of having to endure films that have no business at a festival. . . . *Horizons Nouveaux*, a South African short screened this afternoon was hooted at; the Yugoslavian short *Ondes Noires* is at least well-photographed, with a certain plasticity. A feature film was amusing, though bizarre: Moroccan actors playing Molière's *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* in their own language and quite in their own way. This provided some good comic effects although their director is a Frenchman, Henri Jacques.

This evening, we have a Belgian documentary *Buana Kitoko* (*Our Majesty*) recording the travels of the Belgian king through the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Too long on the whole, but containing some sequences of African life that are interesting. *La Escondida* (*The Hidden One*) from Mexico, features that inevitable pair, Maria Felix and Pedro Armendariz and the inevitable photography of Figueroa. Directed by Roberto Galvaldon, this film has all the virtues and flaws of the typical Mexican product: too-lush photography, a plasticity of figures against backgrounds. Figueroa has mastered color; he achieves a sort of "sfumato" for the daytime shots, and one beautiful nighttime sequence with a train has erect figures in relief against the sky and lights flickering here and there. The relief of his shots is here managed with a discretion surpassing his black and white compositions. As to the film, it has the familiar heroic, sometimes pompous verve; the action comes perilously close to melodrama. Late at night, we are shown *hors festival* a Brazilian film by the team that made *O Cangaceiro—A Estrada* (*The Road*) by Oswaldo Lebre de Sampaio. This is better than the Brazilian film shown in competition; it has been superficially influenced by *The Wages of Fear*, but long pauses that should create suspense burden it instead. Its documentary-like treatment of road construction is rendered artificial by symbolism that insists on uniting the Road and a beautiful girl as a truckdriver's destiny. The film *Tarde de Toros* is receiving acclaim from bullfight fans who express amazement at the arena shots. The performance is said to contain some beautiful "passos." Maybe so; it seemed very slick and commercial to me.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9. Innovation. For the first time, a delegation from the Chinese popular republic has been invited. They were represented in the animated film showings and by some material at the exhibit. They also held a press conference and the director of the excellent *The Girl With the White Hair* was present. . . . After the afternoon screening of a Roumanian film about a painter, Nicolas Grogorescu, comes Ronald Neame's *The Man Who Never Was*, from Great Britain—a well-built film with a good deal of suspense. Evening brings a widescreen short from Italy, *La Corsa delle Roche* about interesting marriage ceremonies in a Sardinian village; it also has a splendidly filmed horserace. Gian Luigi



Polidori's direction catches some qualities of de Seta's Sicilian idylls, but not quite their intensity. *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, from Hollywood, disappoints. Its rosewater conception of the nice boss and the selfless suburban judge were received with distaste and disapproval. The whole film seems insincere and unauthentic, and Jennifer Jones, who can be good, lapses into grimacing.

During the Chinese press conference, the Japanese *Samurai* was shown. I was sorry to have missed this one, for it is said to be pictorially as beautiful as *Gate of Hell*. Most of the best films continue to be shown *hors festival*.

THURSDAY, MAY 10. Such is the case with another bullfight film, *Toro!* from Mexico, made by the same team that won last year's critics prize with *Raíces*. Unlike the Spanish *Tarde de Toros*, this is magnificent reportage devoid of fiction, the life story of Luis Procuna, a courageous *torero* who conquers fear, the public, the bull. Procuna plays himself, bearing out the suggestion of the other film that bullfighters can be excellent actors. The film is built by means of newsreel footage (featuring Procuna and some of his famous colleagues) which was culled by the director Carlos Velo and his team from film archives. The camera captures the full actuality of Procuna's existence, follows him about, recording Mexican life in its dailiness, revealing defeat and victory. The result is a film of extraordinary impact, vivid and true, with nothing artificial or slick about it. You can feel the heat of the arena sequences and the street scenes, and the people surrounding Procuna are impressively natural. The camerawork, it should also be noted, is fine, too.

Evening. *Gerald McBoing-Boing on the Planet Moo*, followed by the de Sica-Zavattini *Il Tetto* (*The Roof*) the story of a newly-married couple in search of a place to live. If it does not attain the desperate humanity of *Umberto D* and *Bicycle Thief*, or the complex optimism of *Miracle in Milan*, there is yet much of de Sica in it: little humorous touches, an understanding of simple people, the noisy well-meaning ways of a large Italian family. We already knew this film was not one of the prizewinners; it ended to an ovation that included the critics' rows.

Now we learn the *palmarès*, the prizes which everyone divulged to everyone else this afternoon as closed secrets.

### Audio-Visualists at large:

## AMERICAN FILM ASSEMBLY, CHICAGO, APRIL 22-27

### GIDEON BACHMANN

The American Film Assembly (AFA) is the only American film festival which judges films and awards citations. Compared to the annual conventions of EFLA, DAVI, NAVA and other "audio-visual" events, which compete with it for attention in the informational film field, it is the only meeting ground which may eventually develop into a U.S. counterpart for the international film festivals of Edinburgh and Venice.

The AFA is organized by the Film Council of America (FCA), now in its 9th year of existence. FCA works towards the creation of mutual awareness on the part of users and producers. This year, over 250 films in 22 different categories were screened for selected juries and members of the public, and 22 "Golden Reels" along with 44 "Silver Reel Citations" were presented to a mixed crowd of recipients at the banquet. The 400 representatives of the field who came for turkey, cranberry sauce and the band, also heard an impassioned plea by FCA president Wagner for continued support of a venture that truly deserves encouragement. For the wish and the apparatus exist. FCA encompasses many large national organizations and industrial concerns, and can virtually reach across the nation. For years America has let the Academy of Motion

France wins most of them; First Prize (*Palme d'Or*) for Cousteau's *Le Monde du Silence* and a Special Jury Prize (unanimous) for Clouzot's *Le Mystère Picasso*. This announcement meets with much public opposition, but a good half of the audience acclaims it. For best direction: Youtkevitch's deserving *Othello*. America wins the best actress award for Susan Hayward in *I'll Cry Tomorrow*. The prize for poetic humor goes to the Swedish *Sommarnattens Leende*, and the human document prize to the Indian film, *Paithan Panchali*.

Shorts: A *Palme d'Or* for Lamorisse's *Le Ballon Rouge*, and—a rather unlikely choice—the uninspiring Belgian film *André Modeste Gretry*. For best fiction film: *Magadana's Little Donkey* (USSR).

Special mention: the puppet films of the Czech Jiri Trnka. (Why not the films of Zeman also?) A prize for research work *ex aequo* to Lorenza Mazetti's *Together* (Great Britain) and to *Tant qu'il y aura des Bêtes*, by the photographer Brassai.

At the final gala dinner, more awards are announced. De Sica receives a well-earned *Prix de l'Office Catholique International du Cinéma* for *Il Tetto*. A special color prize goes to the Brazilian *Sous le Ciel de Bahia*, another for sound effects to the Russian *Le Tovaritch Prend la Mer*; the Yugoslavian *Ondes Noires* wins for black and white photography. We women critics of France have instituted a new prize—*Prix de Canes de Cannes* (which is a *jeu de mot* meaning 'Prize of the Female Ducks'); it went to Ingmar Bergman's *Sommarnattens Leende*.

As with all awards, there were many regrets, many objections. Most of us thought the performance of the Young Greek actress Elli Mabeti in *The Girl in Black* more compelling than that of Susan Hayward. And many regret that the Hungarian film, *Un Petit Carrousel de Fête* (Korhinta) did not win anything. I myself would have given two equal prizes to the Cousteau and Clouzot films, and the *Palme d'Or* to the Indian film. What a pity the Japanese film and the Mexican *Toro!*, both shown *hors festival*, could not win prizes.

Cannes is over; we are awaiting the effects it will have on the new regulations of the Venice festival. There, the festival committee, and not the different countries, will choose twelve to thirteen entries. They are already thinking of taking *Toro!* as one of them.

Picture Arts and Sciences make its decisions and give its awards. If FCA is able to correct the AFA's many shortcomings (such as the juror selection system, the criteria employed in evaluation, the lack of across-the-board support from the industry and the dearth of an overall policy), it is quite conceivable that it will continue to grow in importance. In Chicago this year, some of the faults were painfully evident. On the other hand, a certain positive, cooperative spirit was manifested which added pleasure to the usefulness of the occasion. If this spirit is an indication of the future, the AFA may eventually find the support it needs and the road it seeks.

### PANEL SESSIONS

As a sort of creative appendix, "critique sessions" were held this year in each category at the end of the competitive screenings. In addition, discussion meetings and informal gatherings took place peripherally. It is here that the true value of the AFA became apparent: a picture of filmic thinking in America today emerged. It was not an encouraging picture. The two most interesting sessions, involving extensive participation on the part of the jurors and a mixed professional

audience, took place in category 21 (Experimental Films) and 16 (Theatrical and Musical Arts). Although the actual judging was far from inspired (in category 21 the jurors' preference for *The Towers* over Maya Deren's *The Very Eye of Night* for the silver citation seemed hard to excuse, and in category 16 the Golden Reel award to *Pantomimes of Marcel Marceau* instead of the superlative *White Mane* almost by definition disqualified the jurors for lack of cinematic understanding)—some interesting observations were made in the subsequent discussion. Notably an incisive criticism of the young contemporary "avant-garde" for lack of originality and a narcissistic preoccupation with the self was loudly applauded in the Experimental category. In Theatrical and Musical Arts the question of using one art form to express another (a film "about" Milhaud, as compared to one through which one would *experience* his music, for example), was discussed extensively, but unfortunately many seemed to feel no compunction in using film strictly as a means of documenting and the possibility that one might have to consider the cinema's intrinsic methodology and create "film art" rather than an "art film," found few supporters.

#### FILM TEACHERS, FILM SOCIETIES

The difficult position of the film *teacher* in the face of insufficient acceptance of this "new" medium as a true art form even today, and even on a University level, was brought out in the panel session "Teaching Film Aesthetics." The lack of proper textbooks, of a tested curriculum, and of sufficiently broad cultural background in many students (brought about, perhaps, by too early a stress on specialization rather than by an insufficiently scholarly approach) was emphasized by many film teachers present. But a basic deficiency was claimed in our teachers themselves: the lack of a courageous approach, the unwillingness to take a stand, to meet situations head-on. Film, it must be argued, is an expression of our times: its best examples are those treating of contemporary human problems—it cannot be taught abstractly by stressing technique or history or the variety of its uses. Only a few of the teachers present seemed truly aware of their responsibilities.

As in previous years, the American Federation of Film Societies (AFFS) held their annual convention in conjunction with the AFA. Delegates from member-groups (few, alas, in a period of college exams!) saw films newly available to them, elected officers for another year, and generally tried to reappraise their position. America has been slow in following the lead of most foreign countries in developing extensive film society movements, and AFFS (started 2 years ago at the

first AFA and formally founded in 1955) is the last consolidation of groups of this kind in a major world film center. Here, too, the lack of an all-encompassing policy and the unawareness of social responsibility is evident. Most film clubs meet "to see films that cannot be seen elsewhere," not always chosen for values in addition to inaccessibility. On the other hand, a few serious film societies around the country are doing pioneer work in bringing valuable film fare to cinematically-arid communities. It seems that the prime objective of AFFS should be the creation of awareness in its member-groups that they fulfill a responsible function in their community, as well as providing them with guidance and materials to meet this responsibility.

"A long, smooth, dollyshot to nowhere," is what George Stoney, film-maker, called the stereotyped techniques employed by most producers of sponsored films today. Speaking at the general luncheon, Stoney condemned conformity ("Take a chance? Not with my film!"), oversimplification (all characters are either white-good or black-bad) and fear of failure as the pitfalls that keep men from making films which remain in the mind, or make us think.

#### AWARDS

Judging of films by the 22 juries is done on the basis of a "statement of purpose" prepared by the *submitter* of the film (mostly the distributor or sponsor, not the producer or director). Jurors are asked to determine to what degree a film "fulfills its stated purpose." The havoc perpetrated by this system in some categories, notably Features (with a commercial American film librarian trying to reconstruct the "purpose" of a De Sica or a Cayatte) or Experimental Films (whose creators, having chosen celluloid for self-expression, are at best over-articulate on paper and often have to devise a "purpose" *a posteriori*, just for AFA), can easily be imagined. Almost anyone in the field can sit on a jury: jurors are approved (by an appointed board) for the various categories indicated in the jurors' applications. The result was that some categories had 5 and others 15 jurors. Nor is it strictly obligatory for a juror to carry his assignment through: disqualifications are easily obtained by failing to attend a screening session, so that no real sense of responsibility is developed. It would seem that a careful and meticulous selection of, say, five jurors for each category (and ten of *those* would suffice!), based on specific background and experience, would result in a more equitable hearing for some films. Unfortunately, although FCA functions conscientiously in this matter, it still has to *ask* jurors to serve.

## LONDON LETTER

TONY RICHARDSON

At a time when the commercial cinema in America is at least extending the range and muscle of its subjects, the British outlook is depressingly bleak and unadventurous. Domestic comedies, novelettes, and wartime reconstructions form the bulk of the output from the larger companies, while independent productions are almost completely confined to routine second features, topped with a slipping American star. Financially the industry is somewhat more secure but artistically its energy is at an even lower ebb. Conventionality in material, in approach, in handling, grips the whole scene like an unbroken sheet of grey ice.

*Alexander Mackendrick*

One tiny crack is the latest product of Ealing Studios—*The Ladykillers* (Ealing Studios themselves have been sold to B.B.C. Television and the production chief, Sir Michael Balcon has announced that the company will now work in association with M.G.M.) *The Ladykillers* starts with a splendidly macabre comedy situation. A group of seedy crooks, masquerading as members of an orchestra, use a genteel old lady to

conceal a robbery; accidentally she discovers the theft, leaving them no alternative but to dispose of her. There is promise here of something of the same remorseless fantasy of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Ealing's most considerable success. That this promise in William Rose's script is to a large extent not realized must be blamed on the director, Alexander Mackendrick. The challenge posed for a director by this sort of ironic comedy is to find a tone, a convention almost, inside which both the irony and the comedy can work. This is what Robert Hamer achieved so triumphantly in the stylishness, the epigrammatic grace, and the careful period playing of *Kind Hearts*. The need here was for something similar but rougher and brasher, the touch more of a Preston Sturges. Mackendrick's grasp is not firm or insolent enough and consequently the film is uneasy, switching from farce to burlesque, from satire to pure romp. Nevertheless, despite the pulling of punches, the film is enjoyable. Alec Guinness, with protruding teeth, sparsely lank hair, and a teetering walk contributes a gruesomely inventive performance as the Professor, the leader of

the crooks, and Katie Johnson is a triumphant piece of type-casting as the old lady. One scene is especially delightful: a group of old ladies, expecting a concert, entertain the crooks to afternoon tea and the note of gentle fantasy here perfectly attained is perhaps the happiest for this director.

#### *More About Richard III*

The stultification of the British cinema is nowhere more obvious than in *Richard III*, Laurence Olivier's latest Shakespearean offering. This is the Culture product plus, with a cast full of the famous names of the English classical theatre (including half a dozen theatrical knights), with designs by Roger Furse, a score by William Walton and inspired by one of Olivier's greatest performances from the theatre. In many ways this film is a return to the more frankly theatrical methods of *Henry V* and away from the over-deliberate attempt to be "cinematic" of *Hamlet*. Soliloquies are directly played to the camera, certain sets are semi-stylised, and the general direction seems to aim at keeping both the playing and the period reconstruction within the limits of stage presentation except for the obvious set piece of the battle. In itself this is not necessarily to be criticised. Filmed Shakespeare is inevitably bastard and the choice is between one sort of compromise or another. At one extreme is Welles's *Othello*, just opened here, which attempted to translate the play into a completely cinematic rhythm; and at the other the Houseman-Mankiewicz *Julius Caesar* which tried to let the play take its own natural verbal rhythm. Neither is, to me, at all satisfying. The *Caesar* seems dragging and tame while the *Othello* is not so much a recreation of the drama as a scrapbook of confused, if occasionally dazzling, impressions. It is as if Welles had skimmed through the play once and scribbled down the images and moments that remained in his mind and indications of the milieu it evoked. But *Richard III* fails, disastrously, as both film and stage production. Outwardly more respectful of the text, Olivier takes far greater liberties than Welles. The figure of Queen Margaret, the embittered Nemesis of Shakespeare's Lancastrian-Yorkist wars, is excised completely; the strong, if conceptually simplified, shape of the play and the central dramatic idea are weakened to the point of destruction. This would, of course, be defensible enough were Olivier to replace it with a firm imaginative conception of his own. Beyond a certain narrative adroitness, the sum of his imaginative contribution is a few worn out clichés of stage presentation—bewildered "funny" monks watching the intrigues of the nobles, a washerwoman scrubbing a step, a comic servant scurrying to saddle a horse, shadows of the crookback on monastery walls. Roger Furse's decor fails just as thoroughly and just as lamentably. Costumes and sets are quite unatmospheric and lack unity of impression. The crowds are pathetic; the citizens of London would disgrace even a touring opera company. The battle is disappointing and Olivier, after a "The sun will not be seen today, the sky doth frown and lour upon our army," rides out into the scorching light of a Spanish plain. The great black play has been reduced by the director to a Lamb's Tale or a Disney Ivanhoe, graced only by a few worthwhile performances. It is interesting to observe that the most successful of the actors are those who have most consciously pitched their playing to the demands of the screen—John Gielgud (in a performance as moving and subtle as it is badly lit and shot), Laurence Naismith and Ralph Richardson. It is heartening to see the latter right back on form again. He presents Buckingham as a superb politician, watching and weighing situations; adapting to them with awareness and finesse. It is a refreshing reassessment of a character interpreted as a tough stage marauder.

There remains Olivier's own performance. It hasn't, it must be admitted, all the effect that it had when he first created it in the theatre. The electricity has become too externalised; the power coiled beneath the revellingly malicious and changeable outside like a steel snake was held more in reverse. Here the snake has struck from the outset and consequently the sudden vivid climaxes—the fight, the cushion

meaningfully pressed into Tyrrel's face—haven't quite the same startling potency. The comedy appreciation is overplayed, too, as if he was determined to make the point easy for a wider audience. As director, Olivier overindulges Olivier the actor, and sometimes underlines (with the help of Walton's emptily bombastic score) a point—the bitterness of the young prince's crack at his physical deformity)—with a labouriousness that Olivier the actor would naturally eschew. Nevertheless with all these reservations it is still a wonderful creation—a restless and sardonic tarantula, gleeful in ruthlessness.

#### *Free Cinema*

The success at the National Film Theatre of a program called *Free Cinema* is the most encouraging sign in the cinematic prospect recently. These are three films, each made by young directors working outside the commercial field. They are free in the sense that they had no outside allegiances or pressures and were able to make the films exactly as they wanted them. Two of the films, *Together*, directed by Lorenza Mazzetti, and *Momma Don't Allow*, directed by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson, were sponsored by the British Film Institute out of a fund provided by the National Film Finance Corporation for the making of experimental films. The third, *O Dreamland*, directed by Lindsay Anderson, was financed completely independently. Though they were not made with any thought of showing them together, they all have a basic attitude in common and were made under similar conditions. These conditions—shooting on locations, often with a hand-held camera, the use of non-professional actors, etc.—and the general scale of the film would normally classify them as "documentary." But they differ completely from the conventional documentary in that their interest is entirely in the people and they are concerned with both environment and activity only in its human effects.

*O Dreamland\** is shot entirely in Margate, a seaside resort near London. Charabanc after charabanc pour out a relentless stream of old and young alike, to see the Rosenbergs electrocuted in waxworks, many lions pace incessantly their cages, and to queue interminably for uneatable food in dreary canteens to the strains of Frankie Laine and the endless chanting of lottery numbers. Through the fierce irony of the film burns a passionate concern for the very spirits who are thus wasted and desecrated. *Momma Don't Allow* has a more openly sympathetic attitude. It watches a group of young people from various social classes, debutantes, Teddy boys, typists spending an evening out in a jazz club. Here again it is an attempt not to comment on a jazz club or to analyse values in the dancing but to see how far this is a genuine and poetic expression of the individuals themselves.

The 50-minute *Together* is the most ambitious and interesting of the three. It is a simple tale about the lives of two deaf-mutes living in the East End of London and its simplicity is a token of the quite astonishing purity of feeling of the director, Lorenza Mazzetti, a young Italian who has been living in London. The ordinary rhythm of the deaf-mutes' lives, their longings, their persecutions, their comradeship is given an extraordinary wonder that can make revealing and poetic the smallest details of their lives—how they wash after work, how they wander through a market—and this wonder envelopes too their whole setting so that the poor streets, the bomb sites, the warehouses take on an almost mysterious beauty of their own. No one has ever responded to London in quite such a way before, and although there are obvious allegiances to the neo-realistic cinema in Italy, it has a completely personal note of rapture. In its final form, the film is not sustainably successful and there are signs of a different intention and development, but these structural flaws are unimportant beside the rare and original talent it evinces.

\* Distributed in the United States by Kinesis, Inc.

# FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

## Romance De La Guardia

### Civil Espagnola

14-16

y ocultan en la cabeza  
una vaga astronomía  
de pistolas inconcretas.

21-26

¡Oh, ciudad de los gitanos!  
¿Quién te vió y no te recuerda?  
Ciudad de dolor y amizcle,  
con las torres de canela.  
Quando llegaba la noche  
noche que noche nochera,

49-50

La media luna soñaba  
un éxtasis de cigüeña.

61-68

En las esquinas, banderas.  
Apaga tus verdes luces  
que viene la benemérita.  
¡Oh, ciudad de los gitanos!

82-83

Un vuelo de gritos largos  
se levantó en las veletas.  
Los sables cortan las brisas

85

Por los calles de penumbra

98-99

Tercos fusiles agudos  
por toda la noche suenan.  
La Virgen cura a los niños

100-101

con salivilla de estrella.  
Pero La Guardia civil

102

avanza sembrando hogueras,

104-105

la imaginación se quema.  
Rosa la de los Camborios



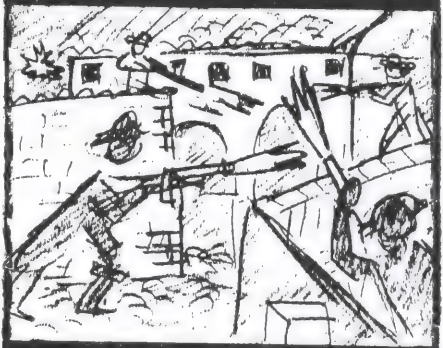
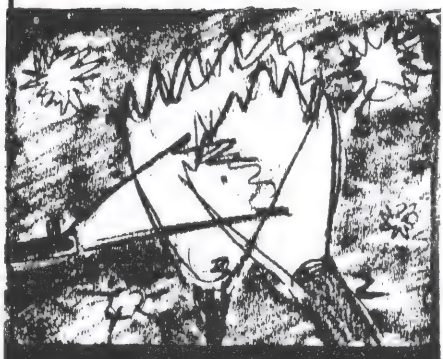
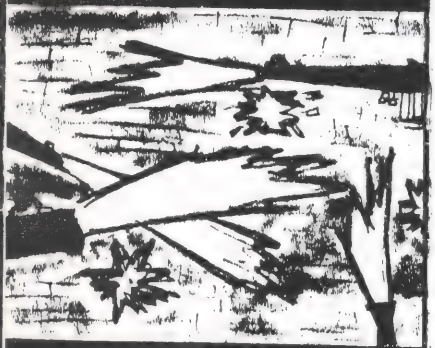
14 15, 16, - 1st half

X D to cross section of  
scented which X D to  
independent pills  
then X D to sky & pan down to  
city # 17

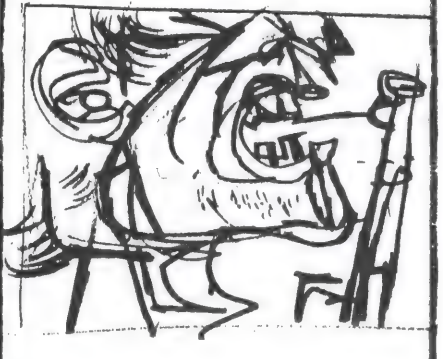


49, 50

Con luvie 47, 48 prologari  
pan to perone-like monks  
bq. pan to set up in se 51 52



*Cos pueror pan or "pegin"  
to start quos*



A painter in his early youth, Mr. Francis Lee acquired motion picture training as a combat cameraman during World War II, and subsequently turned to film-making. The three films that he has made until now have won recognition in this country and abroad.

Although all three of Francis Lee's films are semi-abstract in form,—(Mr. Lee feels that the abstract form suits to express universal ideas more than other forms)—they are strongly linked with life through the compelling symbolism of their images. **1941**, his first, is a semi-abstract, expressionist anti-war film and expresses in colors the terror of war and nazi expansion; **Le Bijou**, is an abstract comment on the alienation and the frustrations of poets and intellectuals in our society; **Idyll**, abstract-impressionist in its form, is an expression of joyous lyrical feelings that nature evokes in man.

Francis Lee's coming film is a visual poem based on Federico Garcia Lorca's famous ballad "Romance de la guardia civil Espagnola." "Several reasons," stated Mr. Lee, "have prompted me to attempt the transposition of this poem onto film. First, like all good poetry, it is rich in imagery and lends itself naturally to emotional visual treatment. Second, it deals with an important theme: persecution of national and racial minorities. With passionate indignation it describes the raiding of a Gypsy village by the Spanish civil guards. I believe that the artist is accountable to mankind for his creation, and should therefore seek to express through his individual form themes of universal importance, just as Lorca did when he wrote this ballad."

The film will be in 35mm, in color. It will have four sound-tracks—Spanish, English, French and Italian,—for international commercial distribution. Mr. Lee will welcome advance financial help for the completion of the production.

# A NEW FILM BY FRANCIS LEE

# COFFEE, BRANDY AND CIGARS (XXII)

## More Things You Probably Never Knew Till Now, And Got On Just As Well Without

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

Lafont: I've observed a number of things.

Clotilde: What?

Lafont: Oh, nothing. They're just nuances. But, after all, nuances . . . one mustn't trifle with nuances.

Clotilde: Let's have a look at these nuances.

—HENRY BEQUE

("A Woman of Paris", Act 1)

Harry d'Arrast, director of that unforgettable quartet of silken comedies at the close of the silent era, *Gentleman of Paris*, *Serenade*, *Magnificent Flirt* and *Service for Ladies*, and one of the first intelligent talkies, *Laughter*, during his brief Hollywood sojourn, now lives in Monaco where he plays the horses. (It was said of him he could even film a telephone in closeup and make it a thing of beauty.)

A thought apropos the transition from silence to sound in the films: Thoreau's "Silence is audible to all men, at all times and in all places. She is when we hear inwardly. Sound is when we hear outwardly. All sounds are her servants and purveyors . . . (Silence) remains ever our inviolable asylum where no indignity can assail, no personality disturb us."

John Huston (whose *Moby Dick* is illumined only fitfully by the apocalyptic visions of Melville's titanic book, a not inconsiderable feat, nonetheless) will screen *Tabu* before filming his second Melville story, *Typee*, which Murnau had also once wanted to do, and which is also set in the South Seas.

Did anyone ever mention the influence Georg Kaiser's expressionistic play of 1920, *Gas*, must have had on Lang's *Metropolis*?

And is it coincidence or more that the imbecile child in *La Strada* is called Oswald and the tragic character who succumbs to imbecility in Ibsen's *Ghosts* is called Oswald?

Recent use of "musique concret" in a feature film occurs during the "stream-of-consciousness" soliloquy of Hitler in Pabst's *Der Letzte Akt* (called here *The Last Ten Days*). First use—*Romance Sentimentale* (Alexandrov-Tissé), Forthcoming use—Hans Richter's new feature, 8 X 8. Another effective use: underscoring the mad drive of Prof. Baum back to the asylum at the close of Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*.

What makes Buñuel—Buñuel: The searing last shot of *El Bruto*, played in sudden, terrifying silence, showing Katy Jurado, who has just betrayed her lover and brought about his death, staring horrified at a rooster she finds perched in her house on her return. ("And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."—St. Mark, 14:30.)

No story or novel by the late Willa Cather, one of America's great writers, will ever be filmed, as per this proviso in her will.

Cy Endfield, whose *The Sound of Fury* galvanized the American cinema for a brief moment, says you can easily tell the difference between ordinary screen and VistaVision—on the latter the scratches run sideways instead of up and down.

The first reasonable use of CinemaScope: in *Ob, Rosalinda!*—the full-screen closeup of Ludmilla Tcherina's nude leg stretched on a bed the entire width of the screen.

"Autumn Leaves" (Feuilles Mortes), which preceded the "Moritat" song on the current "hit parade," was from a flop French movie, "Les Portes de la Nuit" by Carné.

The late Warner Oland, who was Swedish, began by translating Strindberg's plays and ended by playing Charlie Chan in Hollywood. (He had but one intelligent role in his whole movie career, though still as a Chinaman, in von Sternberg's stunning *Shanghai Express*.)

All Hollywood films about Egypt of the Pharaohs are inaccurate in at least one respect in that they cover the bosoms of the women which, in those days, were bared. (Which reminds us that Sophia Loren, before she became a star, appeared as did her ancient Egyptian sisters, in an Italian comedy, *Era Lui, Si Si!*)

The current radar platforms at sea, man-made "islands" on stilts in shoal waters off the north-east coast of the U.S. mainland, were presaged in a Ufa film, *F. P. 1 Doesn't Answer*, in the early thirties.

*Rashomon*, praised as a great Japanese film in Europe and America, flopped in Japan, where it was regarded as the most occidentally influenced of all Kurosawa's films. (It was Gance's *La Roue* which inspired Kurosawa to embark on a film career. And it was Maeterlinck who once called Gance, "The greatest visionary of the cinema.")

Discrimination as practiced by the Production Code: (Banned) The title in the Lollobrigida comedy, *Frisky*: "It's alright for you to look at me in the nude . . . I'm an artiste." (Passed) The line in *The Trouble With Harry*: "I'd like to paint you in the nude." *Pourquoi?*

Add boners in classics: Although a surgeon attached to the bullring in Madrid is introduced early in *Blood and Sand*, Valentino, as Juan Gallardo, the matador, is apparently allowed to bleed to death unattended by any surgeon after he has been gored . . . just so Lila Lee can bid him a touchingly protracted *adios*.

With film pre-censorship reeling on the ropes in the U.S. at long last, two recent statements, if truly meant, are heartening: Eric Johnston's "The fight will continue until all prior censorship is eliminated everywhere in the U.S." And Sam Goldwyn's "We should and must have the same right as any other medium to say what we think and to show what really exists." He denounced Johnston's own Production Code as prior censorship.

Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* will finally be filmed by Robert Siodmak, with Curt Juergens as Hans Castorp, and either Sophia Loren or Silvana Mangano

as Clavdia Chauchat. Erika Mann will collaborate on the screenplay.

Other extreme: Eugène Deslaw (*Marche des Machines, Montparnasse, La Nuit Electrique* u.s.w. in the avant-garde era of the twenties) will make his next film, *Images en Négatif*, to be projected entirely in negative.

*God is Tired* is the title of a philosophical film currently made by two French Negro students, Michel Francis and Paul Dominique, at the Cité Universitaire in Paris.

And the title of the new film by Jules Dassin (director of the brilliant *Du Rififi chez les Hommes*) is *Christ Re-crucified*. While André Cayatte continues his inexorable examination of law and justice in *An Eye for an Eye*, Robert Bresson returns, after a too-long absence, with *A Death-house Convict Has Escaped*.

This-We-Want-To-See-Dept: The forthcoming film of Erskine Caldwell's *God's Little Acre*, to be directed by Anthony Mann from a script by Philip Yordan, to be independently produced by the three of them.

André Roussin, one of the most successful Parisian playwrights, is writing a play about Chaplin.

Cocteau claims the single film figure that influenced his work most was Harry Langdon. (For that, he will forever be *persona grata* with me!)

To admirers of Huston's *Moulin Rouge* and Renoir's *French-Cancan*, I recommend that true painter's film and truest evocation of "la belle époque" of the Second Empire, the real low-down, Zolaesque *Nana* of circa 1926-7 by Renoir with Catherine Hessling as Nana. Man, he was really flyin' then! (And for a savage caricature of this same period, I give you *The New Babylon*, by Kotsnitsov and Trauberg, a film of the Paris Commune of 1870, as vertiginous a display of *saevo indignatio* as the screen has ever vouchsafed us.)

Interrupted Dream (Heavenly Discourse variety):

Angel: "I hear they've got big screens now."

Lubitsch: "You don't say!"

Angel: "And because the screen's are bigger, they say the pictures are better."

Lubitsch: "Well, what d'you know!"

Von Sternberg's controversial *Anataban* drew ecstatic reviews in Paris, where Arts-Spectacles called it his crowning work and the best Japanese film so far.

Said an old-time director to me recently anent the custom of von Stroheim and Griffith sometimes having had credit lines reading "Personally directed by. . ."—"Look, man, my hat was always off to those two but, what the hell, did they think the rest of us directed by mail?"

"This simple band of exposed celluloid constitutes not only an historical document but is in itself a part of history—a part which has not vanished and has no need of a magician to bring it back to life. It is there, scarcely asleep, and all it requires to walk and re-live the hours of the past is a little light passing through a lens in surrounding darkness." (Boleslas Matuszewski, "A New Source of History," Paris, 1898.)

## ELIA KAZAN

(Continued from page 7)

### *Social drama in soft focus*

*Pinky*, released in 1949, was one of the last films in the anti-prejudice cycle. Instead of relying on shock value for its effect, it concentrated on the personal problems of its heroine, a young Negro girl trying to find her place in society. As a personal drama, it was fully suited to a more romantic treatment than in Kazan's previous films; therefore, the girl is characterized through soft-focus photography and a melodic score by Alfred Newman. This technique proved extremely effective; the prejudice aspect of the plot is not emphasized, but the heroine is remarkably presented in hazy panning shots as she walks down the sidewalks of her small Southern town. The role was played by Jeanne Crain, a comparatively inexperienced young actress who was guided by Kazan into a sensitive and graceful performance which gives substantial body to the film. The other major aspect of Kazan's structure appears in the finely-developed relationship of the girl's grandmother, Ethel Waters, and a Southern matriarch, Ethel Barrymore, for whom the elderly Negress had slaved since childhood. It was with such human relationships that *Pinky* was principally concerned, and Kazan expressed them beautifully through telling cutting and selection of camera angles, with a minimum of explanatory dialogue. Barrymore's death scene is a good example: without a word of dialogue, Ethel Waters' attitude as the camera, gliding away from the bed, discovers her sitting in the corner of the room, makes the relationship concrete and moving in an imagistic way. It is interesting to note that *Pinky* was originally planned by John Ford, and only taken over by Kazan when Ford became ill shortly before the scheduled shooting date. The distinctive pictorial aspect of the film is Kazan's; but the unexpected changes in his technique—the softness and romanticism, most notably—can perhaps be attributed to Kazan's respect for Ford's original conception. When studied in this context, *Pinky* offers an unusual example of a film made by one major director in a close approximation of the style of another.

*Panic in the Streets* (1950) is another semi-documentary, photographed in New Orleans (very effectively), and avoiding musical intrusion through most of its footage. However, it seems probable that Kazan's selection of this subject was less because of its resemblance to the documentary school of picture-making than because it gave him an excellent opportunity for a technical tour-de-force. *Panic in the Streets* is a director's picture, from beginning to end, and it is one of the most expert examples of technical accomplishment seen within recent years. Here, one feels that Kazan has at last fully grasped motion picture technique; he is showing off his facility with the materials at hand. Kazan keeps his camera constantly on the move, with an emphasis on bizarre, odd-angle shots (particularly distance shots from a high vantage point) and rapid cutting,

devices which are startling to the observer familiar with his previous work. The methods are well adapted to this type of melodrama—for stylized melodrama, and not realism, is the essential level of this film. The harsh lighting and naturalistic acting of unfamiliar bit players, associated with the semi-documentary school, are here used as masking devices to impart realism to an elementary "cops and robbers" plot. As a documentary, *Panic in the Streets* is hardly believable, but as a melodrama it is a complete success. The film builds tension expertly, culminating in a brilliant chase sequence through the dock warehouses which is as cinematically effective as Carol Reed's masterful climax in *The Third Man*. *Panic in the Streets* is a minor film, but as an example of cinematic craftsmanship, it is the best work which Kazan has done.

### **Three ambitious failures**

Kazan was by this time recognized as an accomplished master of motion picture technique, but his great film was still awaited. When he was hired by Warner Brothers to direct *A Streetcar Named Desire*, it was expected that this would be his masterpiece, and, when the film was first released, it seemed that expectations had been fulfilled. The motion picture version of *Streetcar* was, at first glance, overpowering; the acting, in particular, was of a quality seldom witnessed on the American screen. Kazan solved the problems of a confined stage setting by employing a revolving camera technique, highlighted by an imaginative juxtaposition of extreme close-ups and off-angle long shots which gave an intense emotional power to the chamber-drama. This resourceful cinematic method enabled him to preserve the dramatic unity of the play while avoiding the static "canned theater" quality of most such adaptations, and caused his direction to be acclaimed. After careful study of the film, however, it becomes clear that Kazan did not actually achieve his high aim. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is not a major motion picture tragedy, but, instead, is a strident, often brilliant, ultimately exhausting example of surface virtuosity.

The flaw is not within the play, which is inherently dramatic, but in Kazan's treatment. An enlarged close-up technique is dangerous because of the extensive demands it makes upon actors, but Kazan's players prove fully equal to the task, and the resulting motivational perception is a positive dramatic asset. With striking lighting and distorted mobile transitions, Kazan succeeded in imparting excitement and action to the single-set drama. Yet the story is told basically through dialogue, and the arresting photography is merely a masking device to disguise the film's theatrical quality. This flaw would be less damaging if individual scenes were not over-effective. With close-up after close-up driven at the audience, each scene becomes a climax—a brilliant and exciting climax, it is true; but ultimately such a technique becomes fatiguing to the observer. If Kazan really understood the principle of effective close-ups, he would be aware of the drugging effect of over-indulgence in this kind of stimulus. A good director

reserves his close-ups for climaxes, and accordingly makes the effect all the more telling. He is equally careful to release tension after such a climax, and to build carefully for his next. As a result of this deliberate timing, each big scene in the film is milked for its fullest emotional impact. Kazan, whose conception of individual scenes is brilliant, forgets about the placement of these scenes in the overall work, so that his film emerges as a series of powerful crises, each played for everything it is worth, with an ultimately monotonous effect. *A Streetcar Named Desire* has moments which can be compared with the best the screen has to offer (for example, the eerie darting of the camera during Blanche's mad scene, culminating in the striking shot of the broken mirror which concludes the rape scene, followed by the transitional shot of a hose washing trash down a gutter—such images are vivid reminders of the quality of Kazan's imagination). In the final analysis, however, it is an unsatisfactory work of art.

In 1952, Kazan returned to Fox to make *Viva Zapata!*, from an inadequate script by John Steinbeck. The film is an artistic failure, but it displayed a new virtuosity with the camera which surpassed anything in Kazan's previous work. Steinbeck's screenplay is so episodic that Kazan has nothing to build on, and the film inevitably becomes a series of isolated sequences without any unifying basis. Although Kazan was handicapped by an uneven cast and the difficulties involved in the Mexican setting, many of the individual scenes are outstanding. In the wedding night sequence, atmosphere is evoked through a vivid series of images—peasants sitting in the street, drinking, strumming guitars, staring up at the window of the bridal chamber; the bride rolling sleepily about the bed while a moody Zapata stands looking out the window. Even more notable is the scene in which Zapata is rescued while being led to jail. He is marching behind a horse, a rope tied around his neck; a few peasants come to follow the procession, gradually more appear, until the countryside is full of peasants, swarming in a silent throng around the procession. The sequence, directly derived from *Potemkin* (which Kazan has called his favorite film), is an impressive contemporary application of Eisenstein's theory on the compositional effect of moving streams of figures. Also memorable is the concluding episode, when Zapata stands with his horse in the middle of a courtyard. The camera angle suddenly shifts from a close shot to a broad overhead view, when soldiers appear on the surrounding roofs at every side and fire upon the defenseless figure in the center of the screen. The remainder of the sequence, in which Zapata's body is dropped in the city square, is faultlessly executed, and provides a deeply moving conclusion for one of Kazan's most interesting experimental works.

The politically motivated *Man on a Tightrope* uses the background of a circus—a subject which seems as irresistible to serious directors as revolutions, children's observations of an adult world, and elementary chase thrillers. Unfortunately, this type of melodramatic propa-



ganda is not Kazan's forte, and the film is an inferior one. Robert Sherwood's script is superficial, and the acting is below the director's standard. Kazan's consistently "arty" direction is exemplified in the superfluous sequence in which the young lovers go swimming: an overhead camera glides majestically above the stream following the couple while the music builds into a pointless crescendo; the scene, without dialogue, becomes a climax without a context. Although Kazan succeeded in imparting an artificial excitement to the story (entirely through his nervous camera technique), he was unable to sustain any air of credibility, or, more disastrously, to create sympathy for any of his unpleasant characters. The film is best ignored in any serious consideration of Kazan's career.

### **Stylistic Maturity**

It is Kazan's two most recent films which have marked him as a director of major promise. Both *On the Waterfront* and *East of Eden* have serious artistic defects, but these are films of genuine merit. *On the Waterfront*, though extremely uneven, is a drama which commands respect. The story is melodramatic, and is completely acceptable on this level. But Kazan and his writer, Budd Schulberg, consistently attempt to make it more than mere melodrama; they idealize the likable young boy whom Marlon Brando brilliantly plays, and endeavor to turn him into an Aristotelian "tragic hero"—an attempt which Brando is almost, but not quite, able to make convincing. It is patently impossible to take seriously such stock dramatic characters as the villainous union leader and the waterfront priest (they are badly written and badly played); but the intent of the film, in its structure and in Kazan's uncompromisingly "true-to-life" handling of it, is so commanding, and so conscientious, that the audience is practically forced to consider the subject in its relationship to actual life. As such, it is at once shallow and unconvincing, while if correctly considered as merely melodrama—a rather complicated variation on the conventional chase film—it is even more accomplished than *Panic in the Streets*. An equally serious defect is in the abrupt switch which comes in the story shortly before its ending. The film has built carefully to its climax, when Brando finds his brother killed and decides to testify against the union bosses for revenge. After his testimony, his motivation is suddenly forgotten. Brando is now labeled a "stool-pigeon" by his neighbors, avoided contemptuously by his friends (who would apparently have applauded him if he had killed the bosses instead), and he becomes obsessed with the idea that he must justify himself by proving he is not a coward. The hero's cowardice is not, however, the issue which had been carefully developed during the first three-quarters of the film. Kazan, who was intent on making a tightly-constructed drama, tries to glide rapidly over the sudden change in motivation, but he does not succeed in concealing it. From this point on the film rapidly deteriorates. The ending, in which Brando goes alone to fight the bosses, is in keeping with

Kazan's heroic conception, but it is entirely unrealistic. It is made doubly unacceptable by Kazan's strident technique, which, coming immediately after the tricky plot development, leaves the observer with the feeling that he has been cheated. Kazan, by working up an intense superficial excitement at the end, is forcing the audience to be moved by a basically unacceptable situation. His treatment at the last scene shows the director at his worst. The badly beaten hero, who is hardly conscious, is required to walk, unassisted, to the warehouse to lead the striking workers back to their jobs. The scene symbolizes his victory over the union leader, and, although its premise is questionable, it could be very effective in the hands of such a director as George Stevens. One rear overhead shot would be sufficient: the hero staggers slowly through the crowd which watches in silence, he reaches the warehouse, the workers follow, the door closes behind them, the end. The triumph of the agonizing walk would be doubly effective because of the distance between the hero and the observer; the achievement is, after all, a silent one, and the presence of the watching crowd in the shot would comment adequately upon its meaning. Kazan, however, chooses to jazz it up. Every step that Brando takes is the excuse for a staggering camera movement. The camera veers from one side to the other, blurs as Brando's vision blurs, refocuses in a sharp cut to a close-up of the panting hero, intercuts close-ups of the anxious crowd. An entirely false surface tension is developed. "Will he make it or won't he?"—this is the pregnant question which Kazan hammers at the observer with his entirely artificial technique. The treatment, which commands attention to itself, completely destroys all semblance of meaning in the scene; all sense of the hero's achievement is dissipated by the time the careening camera has stopped its movement. This pretentious conclusion would negate a lesser film.

That *On the Waterfront* is not ruined by such defects is the measure of Kazan's accomplishment. The film as a whole is very good, and the reasons lie in Kazan's genuinely imaginative development of its entire structure before the unfortunate climax. Organized with a power and economy seldom seen in a motion picture, the film is constructed around the central character, and builds him into a figure who, if not quite epic in stature, is completely sympathetic and absolutely real. The development of the character is beautifully manipulated: from his dull sense of honor at the opening to an awakening grasp of moral values in his relationship with the girl; through a remarkable series of love scenes to an ingeniously executed crisis in which he tells the girl of his part in her brother's death. (When his words are drowned out by the harsh sounds of a factory whistle and a passing steamship, the symbolism is astute.) The cathartic sequence is perhaps the best thing Kazan has done: a long, intense scene in the back seat of a car when Brando and his brother (excellently acted by Rod Steiger) face the full meaning of their relationship to one another. Significantly, this climax is staged with a strict economy of camera

set-ups. (Only three are employed: a medium shot of the two brothers together, unobtrusively alternated with semi-close-ups of Brando and Steiger.) The scene's success offers a constructive lesson to a director who suffers from Kazan's flaws of over-emphasis.

*East of Eden* is in many ways a better film. Technically admirable, the film is the first distinguished production in Cinemascope, and will be remembered as such by future motion picture historians. Kazan used the wide screen functionally, panning horizontally, tilting to emphasize distorted relationships, experimenting with soft-focus lenses and unusual lighting and shadow effects, and constantly employing inventive devices to keep his camera moving and the viewer's attention directed to the appropriate section of the screen. The result is a wide-screen film which moves smoothly and dramatically, and expresses its symbolic theme in visual terms. Although the film is marred by Kazan's habit of over-statement and his exaggerated emphasis on violence, the extremes seem appropriate to the Cain-Abel conflict which motivates the plot. *East of Eden* sketches substantially the framework of Californian farming country during World War I, and broaches such pertinent themes as pacifism and racial tolerance; but the film is primarily a character study of its complex central figure. The bewildered adolescent Cain is presented as the embodiment of the Life Force. When, groping for maturity amid the chaos of anguish and hidden hatreds which constitutes his world, he is driven to a violent revenge against the father and brother who threaten his existence, he demands both sympathy and respect. In this Freudian interpretation of the Biblical legend, Cain commits fratricide under the strongest of psychological motivations. His revenge in this context is not only acceptable but obligatory, and the legendary point is reversed. A wholly sympathetic Cain is a figure comprehensible only to the modern audience to whom this film is directed, and, for this audience, Cain assumes the heroic proportions denied to the hypocritical Adam and the smug Abel. This challenging film places modern psychology in conflict with orthodox tradition, and strongly advocates the doctrine of survival of the fittest. Kazan expresses his theme with explicit symbolism which does not detract from the emotional impact inherent in the premise, and the result is a film which is as dramatically impressive as it is intellectually absorbing. Ultimately the film depends upon its central characterization, and this is completely realized in the performance which Kazan drew from James Dean.

### **Concluding Analysis**

After twelve years of formative experimentation, Elia Kazan has achieved his present position as one of America's leading motion picture directors. His career has progressed steadily, from the tentative realism of *Boomerang!* to the technical control of *Panic in the Streets*, from the incomplete realization of *A Streetcar*

*Named Desire* to the maturity of expression evidenced in his most recent films. In the process of developing his technique, he has overcome such early lapses as episodic lack of continuity, static dependence on dialogue at a sacrifice of cinematic movement, and occasional disharmony of treatment and content. A flaw that he has not overcome is a stubborn reliance on technical trickery to achieve the easiest dramatic effects. One of the industry's most gifted technicians, Kazan still searches for opportunities to display his virtuosity, and his tendency to place technique over content has thus far prevented him from making a great film.

Kazan's style is based on theatrical timing and blocking, amplified by a corresponding application of camera technique. The visual style concentrates on continuous movement, with actors steadily in motion and a camera movement which is equally fluid, alternately panning and employing elliptical cross-cutting to keep the viewer's eyes in action. Distorted camera angles and varying ranges of view are clearly appropriate to a technique which emphasizes visual motion. The flow of movement is so regular that any sudden pause achieves the effect of an exclamation point, and Kazan employs this type of punctuation at frequent intervals. Occasionally he reverses the process, by keeping actors and camera in a stationary position which is eventually interrupted by a movement or gesture so unexpected that it immediately connotes violence. Kazan applies the same technique to his sound accompaniment, giving a punctuating effect to any sudden noise or silence. The Actors' Studio method, emphasizing intuitional playing with an emotional basis, is eminently suited to this directorial style. Audiences have come to anticipate the nervous gestures and unconventional diction of a Marlon Brando or a James Dean, and automatically identify them as a Kazan trademark.

This manner of playing is a recent development, and Kazan's technique is an appropriate outgrowth of contemporary trends in American thought. Kazan's most personal films are based predominantly on Freudian psychology, with sexual conflicts arising from animalistic instincts, Puritanical repressions, and familial bonds. The visual symbols are usually phallic, and the climax is almost always resolved in physical violence. It is this excessive attitude which has resulted in Kazan's most serious artistic weakness, his over-emphasis on external action at the expense of emotional depth. Expressing a disinterest in classical forms of expression, but consciously desiring to experiment with major contemporary subjects, Kazan is a director in the most modern idiom, and he is clearly in control of his medium. It is only subtlety which is lacking—the philosophical maturity necessary to translate emotion into experience—and, in order to achieve this goal, Kazan must learn to temper his extravagance with insight. Violent action offers an expressive solution to human problems, but history has proved that the revolutions which produce the most lasting effects are those which occur in the realm of thought.

# CRITIQUES

## FILM MUSICALS - A CRISIS OF FORM

*CAROUSEL*. Directed by Henry King; produced by Henry Ephron; screen play by Henry and Phoebe Ephron; photographed by Charles G. Clarke; dances by Rod Alexander; music, Richard Rodgers; Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, from their musical play based on Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom* as adapted by Benjamin F. Glazer. Cast: Gordon MacRae (Billy Bigelow), Shirley Jones (Julie Jordan), Cameron Mitchell (Jigger), Barbara Ruick (Carrie), Robert Ronnesville (Mr. Snow), Claramae Turner, Audrey Christie, Gene Lockhart. In color and CinemaScope 55. Twentieth Century-Fox.

The recent adaptation to film of several of Broadway's most successful and most audaciously conceived musical plays sets forth a trend: increasingly, this distinctive genre seems to have become the province of directors new to the field of the film musical. From Hollywood's point of view, this development may appear justified, for what is beginning to be emphasized is not form, but story content. Having entrusted Damon Runyon's garrulous *bas monde* to Joseph Mankiewicz, the classic sensationalism of *Carmen Jones* to Otto Preminger, and *Oklahoma*, with its plot of dark and nervous implications, to Fred Zinnemann, Hollywood now gives to Henry King what is perhaps the most revered theatre-piece of all—*Carousel*. The next logical step (and this is not said lightly, for it would perhaps provide an experiment in creative recall) would be King Vidor's adaptation of *Porgy and Bess*. With Henry King, the complement of talent and subject matter is harder to grasp, for he has brought to *Carousel* not the rural simplicity of his *Tol'able David*, but the sentimental and semi-literate gloss of *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*. In this age of high-powered supertechnics, it is perhaps asking too much that Henry King apply to *Carousel* any concept of simplicity; yet, given the theatrics and residing sentimentality of the work itself, simplicity, to say nothing of imagination and form, is all that might have preserved it in its conversion from the symbolism of the theatre to the immediacy of film.

Throughout all these recent adaptations, the fundamental necessity for predetermined form, for cinematic re-creation of the whole, has been neglected. It is not enough simply to shoot, from high and low vantage points, a ballet as it was performed on the stage (as has been done in the "Louise" sequence of *Carousel*) nor, on the other hand, is it enough to exploit the most obvious resources of the cinema so that Gordon MacRae may sing the Soliloquy as he could not have sung it on the stage—against a background of spray and pounding surf. In *Guys and Dolls*, an attempt was made, if only by way of highly stylized decor, to approximate the artificial world of the theatre and that of Runyon's fables. In *Carousel*, CinemaScope 55 pre-

sents to the span or the eye New England beaches, churchyards and sunsets, all very pretty and very real, into which the surrealistic de Mille ballet and the interstellar roving of Billy Bigelow intrude like perverse thoughts in a cathedral. For here again, the American cinema runs aground on the darkling plain of fantasy, and the failure of *Carousel* is the dual failure to realize an adequate film form for music drama and for fantasy.

In this case, the two problems are one. The film musical is, in its highly specialized behavior, fantasy of a sort. And in this most realistic of art forms—the cinema—it must, for fullest response, engage its audience in a wholehearted suspension of disbelief. But years of exposure to the Hollywood musical have conditioned us into accepting, without too much reservation, protagonists who will present themselves in full-throated song, and frequently to the accompaniment of large, unseen orchestras; verisimilitude is now the least challenging problem confronting the musical filmmaker. Moreover, the question of form in musicals has been addressed with great competence by Hollywood in the past, and two traditions have clearly emerged. First, there is what we may call the backstage musical, or the world-within-a-world type of musical. The outer world is the film proper, populated with entertainers, struggling musicians, etc., whose main job is to put on the show. The inner world is the show itself, invariably the world of the theatre. From *Broadway Melody* through the Grable confections to the current remake of *Anything Goes*, the backstage musical has been a constant form, and, though it continually assigns to cinema the uses of the stage, its inner world has usually been more cinematic than theatrical. (Recall the huge, mobile sets and massed legions of chorines attaining all degrees of flamboyant abstraction to which Busby Berkeley aspired.) The second tradition is an outgrowth of the first; here the two worlds are merged. In *Swingtime*, Fred Astaire plays a stage entertainer, and this fact allows him spontaneously to serenade Ginger Rogers while she shampoos her hair in the privacy of her boudoir. Had he played, for example, an insurance broker or a grocer, there would have been more disbelief for our audiences to suspend, even though he is Fred Astaire. In this second type of musical, the framed construction of the first gives way to a freer form, allowing for thoroughgoing integration of plot and musical numbers, as in opera. But the majority of such productions remains curiously hybrid; while characters in these musicals may sing and dance, seemingly, any place and any time they choose and, by so doing, may even advance the film's action, there is yet a reluctance to forego the external reference. We are always aware that Crosby sings because he is Crosby, and not because, as a specific character in a musical film, he *must* sing as part of the film's total expression. With the exception of a notable few (*The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Good News*, *On the Town*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*) the film musical of the "integrated" type

features all forms of musical gesture as arising from the presence of the performers, and never the other way around.

With plays like *Carousel*, it is very much the other way around. In its inter-reliance of dialogue and song, its decisive fusion of plot and narrative ballet, *Carousel* remains the fullest attempt the American stage has made at thorough music drama, fuller, even, than *Porgy and Bess*, which eschewed dance as a form of expression. Beyond this, it is in its subject a serious piece of work, deriving equally from the psychomusical experiments of Kurt Weill—and the technical revision of *Oklahoma*—the permission to treat (however tentatively, however sentimentally) death, trauma and "social maladjustment." Under Rouben Mamoulian's direction, the play *Carousel* attained a singular eloquence; dark and roseate by turns, its emotions and artifices sat naturally in the theatre's microcosm. The fairground, the fantasy ballet, Billy's heaven-to-earth excursion were in themselves theatrical conceptions. On film, these properties are nowhere related; they are uprooted, rather, from their common theatrical source and supplanted by nothing cinematic—photographed merely as gratuitous demonstrations of CinemaScope 55 or as perfunctorily conceived plot developments, and intercut with large chunks of Maine scenery. Nowhere in the film is there evidence of a unified cinematic realization; everywhere King's direction succumbs to the mannerisms of the stage (the "If I Loved You" duet and the Clambake sequence are the stage originals, coldly photographed and static at that) or to the devices of previous films, as in the "June is Bustin' Out All Over" number, done horizontally, à la *Seven Brides*. And the last part of the film, describing Billy's mission, recalls only Hollywood's past delvings into the supernatural: Mr. Jordan comes again. Plainly, what was needed was the controlling hand of a George Sidney, a Stanley Donen, or most ideally, the visual inventiveness of Rouben Mamoulian himself, whose forgotten *Summer Holiday*, with its Griffith-like touches, stands as perhaps the clearest example of the kind of film *Carousel* should have been.

Aside from form, one suspects that "seriousness" of theme has intimidated Hollywood. Its makers have taken *Carousel's* uplift message quite to heart, made a prolonged labor of it, in fact, and sacrificed to it most of the expository songs and recitatives. The score is marred by many deletions. Gone are such character-building or mood-setting fragments as "You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan" and "Geraniums in the Winder;" gone are the rousing hornpipe, "Blow High, Blow Low" and, regrettably, Billy's climactic "The Highest Judge of All," with its rich imagery so accessible to the filmic imagination. The more popular numbers remain, but the Ephron script presents most of them skeletonized and without sufficient correlation to the preceding dialogue.

Two performances ring true—those of Claramae Turner and Robert Rounesville. But at best, it is an unimaginative *Carousel* that we have been given, resembling on the whole nothing so much as an open-

air amateur production, with a corps of sun-tanned New York recruits. The indigenuity at which Hammerstein's colloquial libretto aimed is rendered fraudulent by their presence in general, and by the presence in particular of Shirley Jones, whose schoolgirl vacuity never suggests a Julie Jordan "quieter and deeper than a well."

—ARLENE CROCE

## MYTHOLOGY OF WISDOM

*A KID FOR TWO FARTHING'S*. Produced and directed by Carol Reed; screen play by Wolf Mankowitz; photography, Edward Scaife; music, Benjamin Frankel; art director, W. Shingleton. Released by Lopert Films. In the cast: Celia Johnson, Diana Dors, David Kossoff, Joe Robinson, J. Ashmore, B. de Banzie, Primo Carnera, and others.

The materials which Carol Reed has chosen for his latest film are of the most dangerous sort. Set in the Jewish garment district in London's East End, peopled with a variety of eccentric characters, and taking as its basic premise a small boy's desire for a wish-fulfilling unicorn, the film's plot outline borders suspiciously on whimsy and suggestions of fantasy. These elements do not constitute promising film material, even for a director of the stature of Carol Reed. Yet it is from these elements that Reed has constructed *A Kid for Two Farthings*, and the result is one of the finest of modern British films.

Carol Reed is one of the most distinguished directors working in the medium today. In his first four films since World War II, Reed earned his reputation as an artist and was awarded a knighthood for his achievement. Certainly there are few directors who have produced a series of films of quality comparable to *Odd Man Out*, *The Fallen Idol*, *The Third Man*, and *Outcast of the Islands*. Reed has actually suffered from this reputation, for when he subsequently made *The Man Between* (a minor thriller of which most directors could be proud), the film was severely criticized by observers who expected only great works from Carol Reed. This unexpected failure may have prompted Reed to experiment with unfamiliar materials in his newest work.

*A Kid for Two Farthings* is a small film with a large theme. Its essential nature is imaginatively expressed in the opening moments, as a pigeon soars majestically toward a distant cathedral and comes to rest, amid the sounds of slum jazz and barking street vendors, on a plaster unicorn above the entrance of a neighborhood pub. The classic theme—the inability of man to exist without illusions—is symbolized by the "unicorn," a sickly baby goat with one deformed horn; and around this symbol, and the boy who believes in it, Reed has built his film. The boy is growing up in a bizarre and complex environment, bordered by archaic religious ritual and a modern profit-and-loss economy. Drawn together into this curious society which forms the boy's world are such assorted contemporary types

as a philosophical tailor with unacknowledged Freudian repressions, his muscle-bound sewing assistant who dreams of becoming Mr. World, a bountifully endowed young lady who consciously imitates Marilyn Monroe in appearance but scrupulously behaves in accordance with the conventions of middle-class morality, a punch-drunk wrestler who personifies the child's conception of a fairy tale's villainous giant, gamblers, prostitutes, mystics. This is a strange but a living world which the child observes with clear and curious eyes, and he divines the secret which each inhabitant shares. These people exist as best they can, and they dream of doing better. Existence and essence are interdependent; the world of actuality is firmly rooted in an aura of imagination.

By limiting himself to the boy and the unicorn which is his id, Reed has created a particular world and probed deeply into its essence. The constant presence of the boy and goat gives the film the structural unity which this sort of fable requires. Reed is in such complete command of his material that his camera work and editing are always right and never obtrusive. The direction is so subtle that, as a consequence, a film which is firmly anchored on solid construction and sound technique gives the deceptive appearance of depending for its effect on a sustained but insubstantial mood. The casual observer who spends a pleasant hour watching this film could hardly suspect the ingenuity which the director has employed in order to accomplish exactly this result.

A carefully chosen group of actors fit perfectly into their roles, never jarring the continuity with awkward mannerisms or inappropriate gestures. In this context, such inexperienced players as Jonathan Ashmore, Diana Dors, Joe Robinson, and Primo Carnera are fully as effective as skilled veterans Celia Johnson, David Kossoff, and Brenda De Banzie. These are not actors; they are people who exist beyond the limits of the camera. The Technicolor photography, in muted blue and purple tones, is exceptionally good, and the music captures exactly the right quality.

When the unicorn dies at the end of this film, the boy's wishes have been only partially granted, and the child sadly realizes that he must build his dreams on the actual world if he hopes to make them a reality. By completing this phase of the boy's education, the unicorn has achieved its purpose, and Carol Reed has tempered his parable with a final note of wisdom. This moving comment completes an outstanding film, which will be remembered as a classic of its genre.

—EUGENE ARCHER

## A SYMPTOM CURE

*THE HARDER THEY FALL.* Directed by Mark Robson; screen play by Philip Yordan, from the novel by Budd Schulberg; camera, Burnett Guffey; music, Hugo Friedhofer. Columbia release of Philip Yordan production. In the cast: Humphrey Bogart, Rod Steiger, Jan Sterling, Mike Lane, Max Baer, J. Joe Walcott, E. Andrews, and others.

In *Champion*, which Mark Robson directed for Stanley Kramer in 1949, the boxing profession was handled with an evasive tolerance; emphasis lay on the personal tragedy and triumph of its ambitious hero, and its brutal fight scenes were simply the realistic and physical means by which the hero is made to suffer. The conscious social attitude of his new film, *The Harder They Fall*, represents a distinct change in Robson's outlook. As he himself wrote in the "Herald Tribune" of April 8, "The intervening years had found me, as a director, with greatly altered attitudes and viewpoints; I no longer saw violence through rose-colored glasses. I had come to hold this one primal belief, that a realistic picture based on a topical subject should be reported with honesty, fidelity and newsreel veracity." For such a conviction, the adaptation of Budd Schulberg's novel was bound to present an ideal subject, "documentary in approach and devoid of any conscious compromise," for an exposé of rampant gangsterism in the boxing industry. For an industry it has become, buoyed by the million dollar investments of promoters, and sustained on a national scale by matches televised weekly. It is therefore not surprising to learn from Robson's article about the boxing world's boycott of the picture's production. "All doors were firmly locked and sealed. We met with bitter and stubborn hostility . . . In one city—better left unnamed—our company of technicians and actors had to be cleared by the public relations department of the hotel with the local boxing stadium before we were allowed to be housed there." Attempts to shoot actual matches were blocked, and the studio was forced to send a cameraman to England in order to obtain some authentic stock footage of fight films; this failed, explains Robson, "because the photography did not match." No stadium or arenas were available, no stock films released; it was not even possible to photograph the exterior of a boxing gymnasium on Eighth Avenue in New York City. And to top it off, the authorities of a television network, after having seen the script, refused to have the network's insignia on an office door photographed in an interior sequence.

Acts of deliberate obstructionism threatened not only the film's production, but also its genuineness of approach to the facts of undercover racketeering. However, the recent investigations in New York and on the West Coast of boxing-world operators, the wrestling debuts of Primo Carnera, Joe Louis, and "Jersey" Joe Walcott, and Rocky Marciano's intelligent decision to quit while he is still rich, healthy and young, have done much to bring to public consciousness the sport's degradation.

*The Harder They Fall* begins with the hiring of a former sports writer, Eddie Willis (Humphrey Bogart) by Nick Benko (Rod Steiger) the shrewd and merciless head of a syndicate handling fights. The deal involves the phony build-up of Toro Moreno, a hulking Argentinian "with a glass jaw and a powder puff punch," who is to be rocketed to the threshold of the world's heavyweight championship in a series of fixed bouts, that is, with all of his opponents "taking a dive."

Benko has imported the South American because "the fight game in this country is falling apart. The boys are all getting too smart. They want to go to college, they want to become doctors, they want to become lawyers . . . they don't want to fight for a living." Eddie manipulates the promotion of Toro Moreno, while Benko puts him through a methodical series of fake victories. The fighter, who really believes in his strength, is now a "bum," one of those "lazy, worthless bums. They won't take a decent job. They don't want to—that's why they're in the business." After his twenty-fifth fixed bout, Toro learns that his opponent has died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Believing that he has killed him, the simple giant is beset by moral and religious scruples and wants to quit. But Benko (who has thus eulogized the dead fighter: "If there's a God in heaven, then I'm sure he will be in Gus' corner tonight.") wants to cash in on Toro, the killer—the man of superhuman power. In order to get paid off, Eddie has no alternative but to reveal to the giant the whole lurid set-up, to divulge that Gus Dandee did not die from the blows of the Argentinian, but was already incapable of fighting after a previous match with the world's champion. Ironically enough, Toro now realizes that he was never a true boxer; yet to be paid, he must fight his first unfixed bout with the world's champion, who cannot be bought. Toro, refusing to take a dive like all his opponents of the past, puts up a courageous fight; he ends broken and bleeding at the hospital, victim of a knockout at the thirty-ninth second of the third round. Nick Benko has now made a killing, taking in a gate of more than a million and a quarter dollars. During the celebration, Eddie Willis receives twenty-six thousand for his services. When he asks for Toro's share, which he has promised to deliver, he learns that "the bum" has coming to him only forty-nine dollars and seven cents. Moreover, the giant has been literally sold for seventy-five "grand" to a manager who will carry him on a circuit, so that every boxer will have a "sporting chance" to knock down "the man who killed Gus Dandee." Eddie walks out on Benko, and puts Toro on the plane to Buenos Aires, after giving him his own share of the receipts. Benko has lost a piece of business, but after all, this is a calculated risk in a big business and "the fight game is a big business." When Eddie undertakes to publish the sordid account of the syndicate, appealing to the people ("the little people, they sit and get fat and fall asleep in front of their television sets, with their bellies full of beer") fighting for "Toro and myself, and every bum that's ever got his brains knocked loose in the ring," Nick exits commenting, "A man that gives away twenty-six thousand dollars, you can't talk to. I want to tell you one more thing. I wouldn't give twenty-six cents for your future."

As a film, the story has been rendered effectively. Without resorting to rhetoric or demagoguery, Robson accurately conveys the drama of the boxing milieu. The actors are directed with vigor and intelligence; Rod Steiger has become one of the happier acquisitions of

the American cinema. There are adroit performances by former world champions Max Baer and Joe Walcott, and an interesting film debut by Felice Orlandi, known for his acting on the off-Broadway stage in *The Girl on the Via Flaminia* and *La Ronde*. *The Harder They Fall*, in its social approach to a world that has been deliberately kept opaque until now, is a much more devastating and sincere film than was *On the Waterfront*. From the fight announcer's speech (" . . . Let us take time out for a moment of silence for Gus Dandee, a real champion who went down fighting, when the Great Referee counted him out for the last time") to the filmed interview with a pitiful derelict fighter of twenty-five years ago, there are no holds barred. There is no happy ending; and in its uncompromising depiction of boxing's lower depths, the film often recalls the finest achievements of the crusading American cinema in the late thirties. "It is not the purpose of our motion picture to pass judgment on boxing in general," writes Robson. "If our film will serve as a guide to illustrate the paramount evils today, then perhaps in some small way our efforts, along with many other voices, may aid the sport in ridding itself of its cancerous elements. When and if this occurs, I will feel that we have fulfilled our cinematic objectives."

Robson and Yordan have fulfilled their aesthetic objectives, making *The Harder They Fall* one of the most honest American films in recent years. But in accordance with the limitation of their vision, they only scratched the corrupted crust of a boxing system which still has to be more fully and deeply explored in future films.

—GEORGE N. FENIN

## FOUL AND FAIR

*THE LADYKILLERS*. Directed by Alexander Mackendrick; story and screen play by William Rose; A Michael Balcon production, presented by the J. Arthur Rank Organization and released by Continental Distributing, Inc. In the cast: Alec Guinness, Cecil Parker, Herbert Lom, Peter Sellers, Danny Green, Katie Johnson, Jack Warner, and others.

The distinguished comic talents of director Alexander Mackendrick and writer William Rose have misfired in both the conception and execution of *The Ladykillers*. The initial premise is promising enough. Five grasping but widely dissimilar scoundrels exploit an ingenuous old lady and her remote, absurdly cluttered house to perpetrate an armored car robbery. Feigning a dedication to solitude and the performance of chamber music, they employ empty instrument cases in their devilish work while relying on pantomime and a phonograph to deceive their music-loving landlady.

As the film progresses, the comedy virtually disappears; Mackendrick and Rose attempt to combine the genial roguery of the *Lavender Hill Mob* with the macabre irony of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Unfortunately, the roguery is not very comic and the irony is not very pointed. The interplay of such contrasting

character types as a cold continental rake (Herbert Lom), a bluff, pink-eyed major (Cecil Parker), an imbecile with an inflexible streak of sentimentality (Danny Green), a debonair boasting cockney (Peter Sellers), and a suave mastermind with a maniacal bent and appearance (Alec Guinness) is muffled by repetitious dialogue and staging.

Not content with the mere dullness that derives from too many static character reactions and too little effective repartee, Mackendrick sets out to depress his audience. He presents a full view of the inter-gang slayings of the four gangsters who have—by the time of their demise—won considerable sympathy by both their high spirits and their steadfast refusal to kill the old lady even after she threatens to turn them in to the police. The elimination of the major is especially tasteless in a drawn-out scene in which he resorts to high-pitched whimpering in a plea for his life.

The strain of macabre melodrama, although unevenly handled, does, however, have two positive functions. It contributes to the aura of fiendish, amoral design which surrounds the figure of Alec Guinness as Professor Marcus. It also blends with Mackendrick's subtle stylization when the victims are neatly disposed of by being plummeted from a viaduct into the empty freight cars of a speeding train. This ceremony is performed in reverent silence amid clouds of vapor and train smoke in the truly detached classical manner.

Several effects—some wide-angle distortion shots; the half-lights and shadows of the setting; the infrequency of incidental scenes and public interference—create a sense of isolation and unreality. This points the way to a possible development towards stylized comic-fantasy, which, unfortunately, is never realized.

Guinness is an effective Dickensian figure, with wild eye, floor-sweeping muffler, and scraggly hair. His performance is cleverly controlled though it lacks the sustained intensity and the expanding humorous development which he has conveyed in the past. It is a little disturbing to note how much of the humor in the film is derived from the outrageous maneuvers of his red-lipped, vampire-toothed, mobile mouth.

Katie Johnson, in dove-grey and improbable white spats, is well-cast as the old lady, a somewhat monotonous character. A touch of irony or reversal in her psychology might have toned up the humor considerably.

There is an obvious effort to use contrast for comic effect; juxtaposing morality against immorality, prim chamber music emanates from a den of thieves; twittering old ladies, deceived amid their tea cups, attempt to lionize the criminals as concert musicians.

The split-second disposal of the surviving Professor by a swinging railroad signal bar—death by automation—engenders surprise, a convulsive laugh, and a depressing after-taste. Any lingering hilarity is finally crushed by the hackneyed "Cry-Wolf" ending. The old lady gets a disbelieving and indulgent nod from the local bobbies who have dealt with her fancies before.

They facetiously tell her to keep the fortune in stolen money.

The irony attempted here, with all the Lady Killers—killed, and the Lady on top of the heap, lacks force because errors in taste and emphasis have misdirected the audience's sympathy into a sense of desolation at the sudden barrenness of the comic scene without its pleasant rogues.

—CAROL RITTGERS

## ALEXANDER - A MINOR CONQUEST

*ALEXANDER THE GREAT.* Written and directed by Robert Rossen; camera, Robert Krasker; music, Mario Nascimbene. United Artists release of R. Rossen production. In the cast: Richard Burton, Fredric March, Claire Bloom, Danielle Darrieux, Harry Andrews, Stanley Baker, and others.

Robert Rossen has aimed for greatness in *Alexander the Great* and has missed honorably. His literate script strives for the genuine historical issues with minimal concessions to the popular image of pagan lust and violence. His direction is consistently effective without attaining any climactic summation. Script, acting, and direction fall into place in the narrative without rising to any heights. In many respects, however, *Alexander the Great* stands closer to *Richard III* and *Henry V* than to the traditional Hollywood spectacles.

Rossen begins his account of Alexander long before he can reap the dividends of world-conquering drama. He traces the Macedonian intrigues of Alexander's father Phillip in relation to the Phillipics of Demosthenes so as to establish a full historical background. Unfortunately, as the film progresses, Rossen's research notes cloud the development of Alexander's character with doubts and ambiguities that are sound enough for the historian but fatal to the artist. Complexity leads to evasion and evasion leads to anti-climax until, in the end, the meaning of Alexander's life and the consequences of his death are shrouded by irresolution.

The acting, like the film, is interesting but seldom gripping. Richard Burton's Alexander possesses genuine stature in his physical presence and in the accustomed heroics of his classic diction. Fredric March is handicapped in his portrayal of Phillip by an instinctual physical technique that clashes with the relative restraint of the supporting British players around him. It is curious to observe how American actors like March and Marlon Brando (in *Julius Caesar*) attempt to compensate for their vocal deficiencies by overplaying the physical aspects of their roles.

Danielle Darrieux is miscast as Alexander's superstitious mother but is still visually impressive, and Claire Bloom picks up the pieces of a strangely mutilated role with extraordinary grace and charm. Among the supporting players, Harry Andrews stands out as Darius. His contrapuntal relationship with Burton's Alexander is similar to that achieved by Laurence Olivier and Leo Genn in *Henry V*. The exchange of

hostile letters between Alexander and Darius is clearly patterned after Shakespeare and possibly Plutarch.

The martial scenes are designed to make Alexander's victories seem tactically plausible. The Macedonian phalanx is shown in some detail, although generally the battle charges deteriorate into a confused jumble of shields and aggressive postures. Sharp-eyed connoisseurs of spectacle may detect some doubling up of extras for mass effects.

The film is least successful when it attempts to be conventional. The tepid orgies are inadequate. More successful is a staged battle between a Persian armed with a club and a Macedonian equipped with shield and spear.

Despite the film's documentary credentials, some of Rossen's motivations for Alexander seem questionable. Alexander's retreat from India seems less the consequence of the death of his best friend than the necessity of ending the film. Despite its weaknesses, however, *Alexander the Great* is a creditable achievement in a genre that has flourished for so long without intellectual distinction. That this film can be discussed at all on the level of art and history rather than production statistics suggests that *Alexander the Great* points to the proper direction, though not the ultimate destination, of the historical epic.

—ANDREW SARRIS

## ON THE 16MM SCREEN

Made under Yael Woll's supervision by students at the City College Film Institute, *Subway* is a short, experimental documentary on a busy New York subway station. Glimpses of the setting, traffic and passengers are caught in a bright, kaleidoscopic view. The film's soundtrack consisting of music from a Caribbean steel band, is less successful. Rhythmic, strong and loud, it is suggestive rather than apt, and remains as alien as it is exotic. A more naturalistic track, would, I think, have been in keeping with the film's direct pictorial quality, and would have contributed more to its true proportions. (*Distributed by The City College of New York.*)

Another film made recently by students at the Film Institute is *Project G*, "a sociological study of why people gamble." The film consists chiefly of actual in-the-street, at-the-track, and in-the-poolroom interviews. Such an approach may seem ingenuous, but the responsiveness of those interviewed speaks for itself and warrants the method's success. The narrator's interpretive remarks are measured and a little academic, but otherwise the film is an entirely fresh combination of journalistic and textbook means. (*Distributed by the City College of New York.*)

In the two films—*Home* and *India*—Charles and Ray Eames combine pictorial design and stasis with radically minimized subjects, a film task so wrought with initial contradiction as to be impossible. *Home* is a treatment of the artists' house, workshop and garden, located in southern California; *India* is based on a textile exhibit held last year in the Museum of Modern Art. Both films are composed entirely of 35mm stills. "Movement" is edited: there is none within the frames. Pacing from shot to shot is so frenetic that the film's subjects become almost meaningless, and it is difficult to see how their intended educational purpose is to be served. (*Distributed by the Museum of Modern Art.*)

*A Communications Primer*, made in 1953 by the Eames and one of the films screened by Cinema 16 (as were the rest of the films reviewed below) in their annual "First Films"

program, is quite different from *House* and *India*. Not only it is free from their fundamental conceptual faults: it is also truly informative: it expresses its subject adequately. The mechanical and psychological apparatus of simple communicative acts is illustrated, the underlying complexity is revealed, and the implications of extreme and negative examples indicated. At its worst, the film has the slickness of a high-grade magazine advertisement, but it has the benevolence of its humor, too. (*Distributed by the Museum of Modern Art.*)

Change of season from fall to winter, as viewed on a small, intimate scale, is the subject of *One By One*. A short film—much of it is beautiful, and a great deal of it is intelligent. It has a number of unclarified "soft" spots, all the more conspicuous since its maker, Madeline Tourtelot, has risked an intense relation to her subject. Miss Tourtelot can already be above sentimentality, and, should she continue working this area of her choice (music, nature and poetry on film), the results will certainly be worth seeing. (*Distributed by Madeline Tourtelot.*)

*Patterns For a Sunday Afternoon* is a diverting excursion into film by the painter Carmen D'Avino. Non-objective expression is geared to visual movement, and the "painterly" use of materials for their color and plastic qualities is combined with such techniques as stop-motion photography. Some parts, especially, which on canvas might have been a series of paintings, are seen as images undergoing mechanically vivid mutations of color and form. (Since they are structurally self-sufficient, their interrelation alone is intriguing.) The result is something never seen before, and an exciting use of the medium. (*Distributed by Cinema 16.*)

*Odd Fellows Hall*, made by Denver Sutton and Leonard Tregillus, might be called a thesis comedy, the thesis somewhat along the lines of W. C. Field's description of Chaplin as "that ballet dancer." Shot in the style of silent comedy, the film is intended as a satire on murder mysteries. It is, however, too intent upon its pure archaic self to engender more than a number of capricious murders and few laughs. Anything more substantial would have meant shattering the film's main stylistic device, and this its makers chose not to do. (*Distributed by Film Images.*)

*Building Children's Personalities With Creative Dancing* is an on-the-scene record of a children's outdoor dancing class, the purpose of which was to encourage freer expressiveness in a group of young boys and girls. While the project in itself was important, its filmic version has no particular point or distinction. A good opportunity to deal with the child's world has been missed. (*Distributed by University of California.*)

An interesting film, *The Towers* by William B. Hale and Wisniewski was in many ways the most carefully complete of those screened. Its subject is the curiously wrought structures of Simon Rodilla, an Italian-born railroad worker and recluse living in a small California town. Strictly from inner necessity Rodilla spends all his free time building functionless, often grotesque, sometimes beautiful and monumental works outside his home. He works alone and without plan, uses whatever stone, glass, and debris is at hand, and though he is entirely absorbed in his work, he cannot clearly articulate his purpose. This film is a summary and report of his efforts. It is also a sincere, if necessarily unimpassioned, tribute to an oddly persuasive dream. (*Distributed by Graphic Films.*)

At one point the hostility of the peasants toward their landlord is seen breaking out into violence, but otherwise *Asian Earth*, by J. Michael Hogopian, is a fairly careful accumulation of non-inflammable data. A traditional Indian family oriented chiefly toward land, clan and Hindu faith (one member, though, goes off to work in an industrial factory) is described as undergoing contemporary pressures and present-day change. The narration, spoken by the mother of the family, is simple and reserved. (*Distributed by Atlantis Productions.*)

—FRANK KUENSTLER



# BOOKS

MANIFESTE D'UN ART NOUVEAU LA POLYVISION by Nelly Kaplan. (Avant-propos de Philippe Soupault) 31 pp. (Charactères, Paris, 1955).

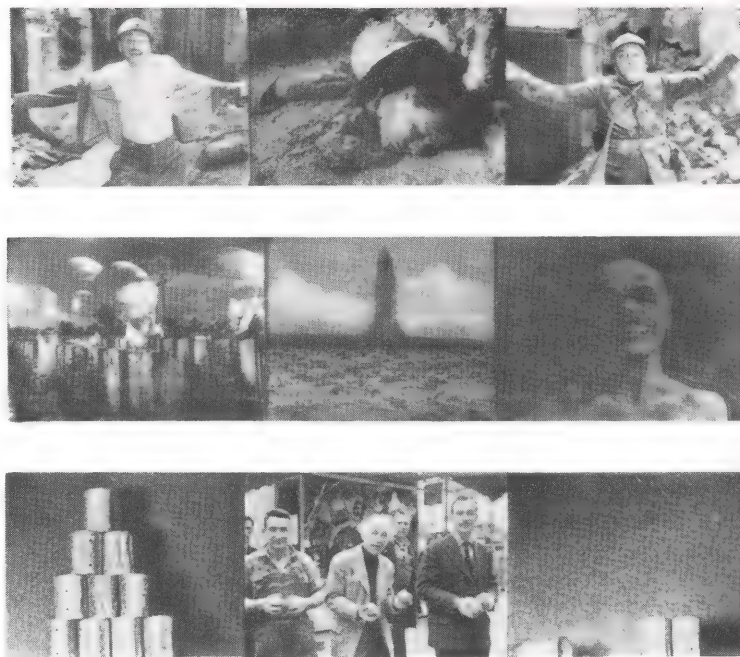
The authoress of this brief but decidedly humanistic tract envisions a "brave, new world" but not in Huxley's ironic sense—her conception is highly optimistic. The atomic age will free man of both physical and spiritual burdens. The present diversions imposed on him must and will change, and art, now moribund, undergoing the same crisis as our present civilization, will enjoy a rebirth, a new synthesis.

Man, she says, seeks escape from the asphyxia of his existence and the cinema provides cheap dreams into which he can escape. But dreams can become nightmares against which he revolts. Box-offices then get into a panic. They lure him back with novelty—big screens—an artificially induced new enthusiasm results for a brief while to drop again to another disappointment. There is no nourishment in it. It is *ersatz* "food"—it tastes like food but it isn't. Our epoch has overtaken art; the cinema is still in the stagecoach days at the threshold of the atomic era. It does not know how to show this new time or what to say about it. Continuing on its past momentum, it repeats mirages of artificial paradises, tear-jerkers that atrophy true sensibility, justifications of past murders to prepare for future ones, biblical indigestions, Don Juans and Messalinas punished by true love, Neapolitan animadversions where no one is hungry because in Naples you eat imagination spiced with love, deformed and tendentious histories, Paris by night, Venice by day . . . the same sad, tired circles of "new" pictures endlessly reduplicated. Even as opiate the cinema has lost its potency.

Miss Kaplan reminds us of the "seven castrations" that maintain the *status quo*: the power of capital to impose its will in shaping the present cinema; alteration, for whatever expediency, of valid subject matter; precensorship; sacrifice of character delineation to the character of the star; arbitrary cutting for reasons of supposed financial expediency; post-censorship; casting and its blackmail.

In the final analysis the problem of re-establishing the balance is one of content, not of form; at the same time, a revolutionary era, such as the atomic age, demands a revolutionary art, not only to mirror it but to shape it.

The future is already here as are its prophets. The madmen of yesterday are the genius-madmen of today and the geniuses of tomorrow. Van Gogh and Rimbaud played this role. Today, among them, is Abel Gance who, thirty years ago, filmed his epochal *Napoleon* for a triptych screen, not merely for the sake of having a bigger screen to impress by its bigness but to use the three screens as an orchestration, as three musical staves on which the harmony of the film could be composed. The development and refinement of



The first two rows depict scenes from the Polivision version of Abel Gance's famous anti-war film, *J'Accuse*, as they appear on the triple screen. The bottom row shows the scene from an experimental short in Polivision, *Une Fête Foraine*.

Gance's triple-screen is today called by him: *Polyvision*, which means, of course, multiple visions. Images are added to images, or divided by them, or multiplied, as the director desires or the creation imposes, including simultaneity of slow, normal and accelerated motion. Lateral screens are raised or lowered to accentuate the central screen-image. The most diverse elements will prove their affinity or accent their repulsion simultaneously. Water and fire will dance together. Each spectator will become an enthralled "victim" of this vertiginous display. Yet all this will be put to the service not of "novelty" for its own sake but for all the expressive devices which *enrich the content and its validity*. Thus, once more, art will be in the *avant-garde* of life; art will be art.

New associations of ideas and reborn old ones whose truth has been forgotten through neglect—a physiological euphoria of new sensations put at the service of truth; a clamorous and exultant counterpoint of the multi-channeled sound-track . . . Cinema as "blithe spirit"—with wings.

For thirty years this idea has been germinating in Abel Gance's fecund imagination. His voice, then muffled by producers' fears, special interests and the sloth of routine, is today raised again when some of his prophecies have already come true. Even the newest of today's films are already obsolete by his standards. *Polyvision* is the cinema of the future, the unique art of the atomic age. Gance, whose creative work in cinema spans almost its entire history of artistic maturity, now appears in the absolutely unique role of pioneer and prophet of the future. Paraphrasing Joan of Arc's anguished cry at the close of Shaw's play, one might justifiably ask at this point, "How long before the cinema will listen to its prophets? How long?"

—HERMAN G. WEINBERG

MOTION PICTURES IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. Documents of the Catholic Church, concerning the cinema. The volume may be ordered from the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City. 560 pp. 2,500 Lire.

The Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, organ of the Holy See studying those problems of such performances as are connected with Faith and Morals, has for the first time collected into an imposing volume the official documents issued by the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in regard to Motion Pictures and their moral, cultural and educative problems.

In this volume 42 documents of the Holy See, headed by the most recent Exhortation of the Holy Father directed to the "cinema world," together with 73 of the most important documents of the Bishops of twenty countries, are given, each in its original language and accompanied by a short summary in French.

In the Appendix are to be found translations in the principal languages of the Encyclical "Vigilanti Cura."

The volume also contains a list of the International and National Catholic Offices and organizations which are dedicated to the Apostolate of the Film. Their addresses are listed as well as their special purposes.

In particular, the volume gives information concerning the above-mentioned Pontifical Commission, the International Catholic Film Office (O.C.I.C.) and the National Film Centers in thirty countries, together with their systems of moral classification of films, their moving picture theaters, and their other dependent works.

The volume "Motion Pictures in the Doctrine of the Church" will prove an indispensable instrument for any organization or individual interested in learning from an authentic source the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the powerful means of communication which motion pictures are in our day.

*IL CINEMA NEOREALISTICO ITALIANO*, by Giulio Cesare Castello; Published by RAI. 116 pages. Italian text.

This current study of Italian neo-realism, written in a clear and revealing style by one of Italy's most capable critics, presents in ten chapters definition, analysis and discussion of the Italian school. A special chapter deals with neo-realistic short features; another discusses Fellini's *Il Bidone*, to be shown here as *The Wastrels*. Provocative commentary about the influence of Italian neo-realism on world cinema, particularly in regard to *Marty*, rounds out a text which is supplemented by an extensive index of short and full-length neo-realistic features, and by a bibliography which, to be sure, is somewhat less than complete.

In view of the current difficulties of the Italian cinema where bureaucracy, over-inflated production, Hollywoodism and censorship continually threaten the true purveyors of neo-realism, this book will serve, among other things, to strengthen awareness of the school that, within a few years, created a renaissance in the Italian film. A new and larger book by Mr. Castello, elaborating on his ideas, is assuredly in order. There is still much to be said about neo-realism, especially in reference to its impact and originality, as compared with other foreign schools.

G. N. F.

*GIULIETTA E ROMEO*, edited by Stelio Martini; 214 pages. *SENSO*, edited by G. B. Cavallaro; 212 pages. Published by Cappelli, Bologna, Italy. Italian texts.

Literature on the film is on the rise in Italy. Among the latest worthy additions to the field is a series of books supervised by the film-maker and critic, Renzo Renzi. The series, which promises to be a boon to film scholars as well as to the culturally curiously public, presents famous films adapted from literary works, tracing their development from the original source to the final cinematic form. The first volume, *Giulietta e Romeo*, edited with painstaking care by Stelio Martini, contains the original story of the two Verona lovers by Luigi da Porto, which inspired Shakespeare, followed by a clearly detailed description of Renato Castellani's first and second screenplays. There are chapters devoted to color, costumes, historical background, indoor and outdoor locations, actors and recitation, and the musical score. An appendix provides well chosen excerpts from the screenplay, and daily reports from Susan Shentall's diary. As a whole, the volume bears full witness to the magnitude of Castellani's production, which became a winner at a recent Venice Film Festival and which has since reaped international acclaim.

The second volume is devoted to *Senso*, the controversial film directed by one of Italy's most representative talents, Luchino Visconti. From the text of Camillo Boito's novel, through first and second screenplay, to continuity, editing and photography, the book gives a full account of the steps that led to the creation of one of the most important films that have recently been produced in Italy. A reading of the shooting script as it was conceived and realized—and, later, censored in part—reveals *Senso* to be a remarkable film, indeed. It is about time for some courageous and intelligent distributor to take the initiative and release the film in the United States. Certainly, it should not be allowed to suffer the fate of *La Terra Trema*, Visconti's masterpiece and a film classic, which still has not been made available to audiences here.

Both volumes are fully illustrated with color stills from the films, and the typography is a fine example of the Italian publishing art. This undertaking, which will include volumes on King Vidor's *Guerra e Pace* (*War and Peace*) and *Il Tetto* (*The Roof*), Vittorio De Sica's latest neo-realist film, unfortunately has no counterpart in this country. While pulp magazines and trash flood the newsstands, no American publisher contemplates an educational approach to motion pictures. There are several good American films that would be worthy of such a series; their enterprising publisher would reap dividends both cultural and financial.

G. N. F.

To be reviewed in the coming issues of "Film Culture":

SAMUEL GOLDWYN: THE PRODUCER AND HIS FILMS, by Richard Griffith. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library, New York. Distributed by Simon and Schuster. 48 pages. Ill.

LES FEUX DE LA ST. JEAN, Vol. 1—VERONICA, by Erich von Stroheim. 707 pp. André Martel, Paris.

S. M. EISENSTEIN, by Jean Mitry. 155 pp. Ill. Classiques du Cinéma, No. 4—Editions Universitaires, 72 Blvd. St. Germain, Paris.

FILM SOCIETY PRIMER, edited by Cecile Starr. Published by the American Federation of Film Societies, 110-42 69th Avenue, Forest Hills, New York. 84 pp.

DAEMONISCHE LEINWAND by Lotte H. Eisner. Published by Der Neue Film, Verlagsgesellschaft Feldt & Co., Wiesbaden-Biebrich. In German. 174 pp.

PANORAMA DU FILM NOIR AMERICAIN (1941-1953) by Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton. Published by Les Editions de Minuit, 7 Rue Bernard-Palissy, Paris 6. 280 pp. Ill.

We hope you have noted the progress we have made since our first issue.

As editors, we had taken upon ourselves the duties relating directly to the publication of the magazine. But the ultimate realization of our aims will largely depend upon the response and effective financial support of our sympathizers. You can help us by being our sponsor.

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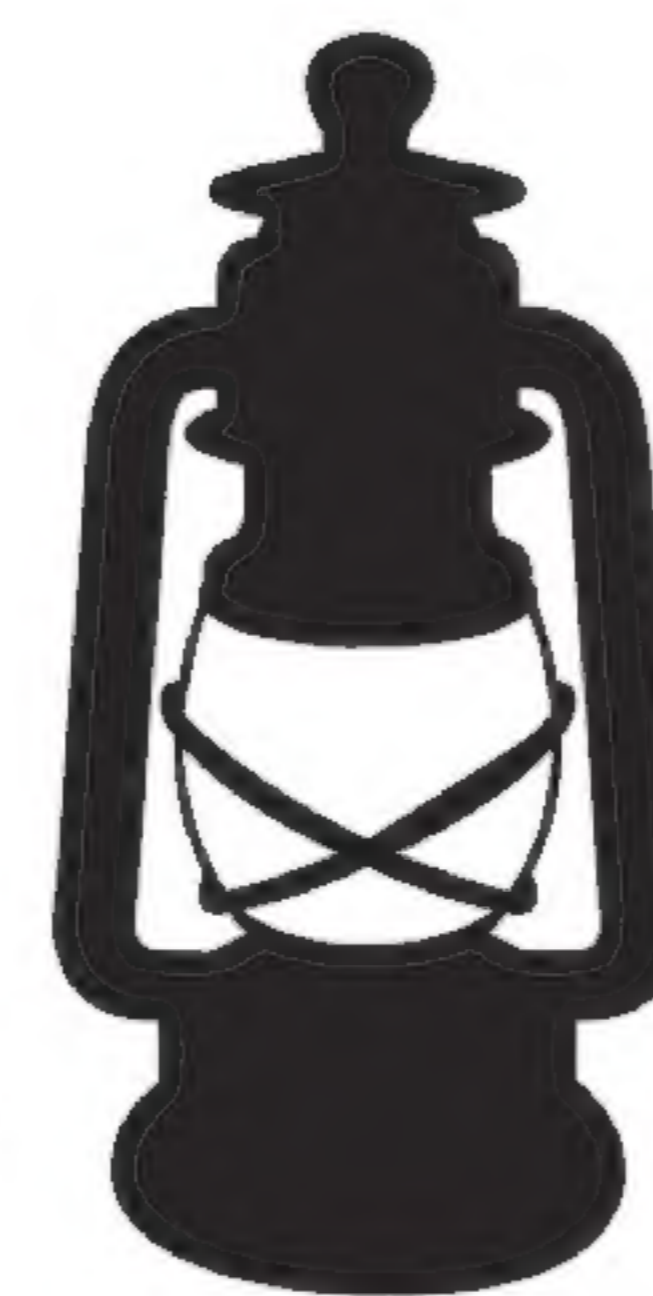
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